PAKISTAN'S CRISIS IN LEADERSHIP

FAZAL MUQEEM KHAN

by the same author:

The Story of the Pakistan Army

Tago Taze Javedana (Urdu)

Pakistan Youth at the Cross-roads

PAKISTAN'S CRISIS IN LEADERSHIP

Major General (Retired)
Fazal Muqeem Khan

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To

Dr. Rafique Ahmad Khan, Ph. D. (Cantab), M. Sc..
friend, teacher and patriot.

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MAPS

ABBREVIATIONS

BSF	Border Security Force (Indian)
BOP	Border Outpost
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CMLA	Chief Martial Law Administrator
COS	Chief of Staff
DGISI	Director General, Inter-services Intelligence
DIB	Director, Intelligence Bureau
DMI	Director, Military Intelligence
GHQ	General Headquarters (Army Headquarters)
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GSO-1, G-1	General Staff Officer Grade I
HQ	Headquarters
JCO	Junior Commissioned Officer
MI	Military Intelligence
MLA	Martial Law Administrator
MLR	Martial Law Regulations
NHQ	Naval Headquarters
PAF	Pakistan Air Force
PNS	Pakistan Naval Ship
PIA	Pakistan International Airlines
PSO	Principal Staff Officer
RR	Recoilless Rifle
VCGS	Vice Chief of the General Staff

Units Names

2 Punjab	2nd Battalion, The Punjab Regiment
15 Baluch	15th Battalion, The Baluch Regiment
6 FFR or FF	6th Battalion, The Frontier Force Regiment
4 EBR or EB	4th Battalion, The East Bengal Regiment
EPR	East Pakistan Rifles (Para-Military Force—Border Police)
Rangers	Para-Military Force—Border Police.
Mujahids / Razakars	Auxiliary Forces trained by Army and equipped with rifles.
Ansars	Auxiliary Police Force trained by Police and equipped with rifles.

INTRODUCTION

I had no intention of writing this book. I had lost interest in writing on military affairs since the warning given to me in 1966, while still in service, not to attempt any analysis of the 1965 war with India. I had diverted my attention to manpower and youth problems after having been retired from the service and having declined an ambassadorship. The pressure of some of my friends to write an account of the events between 1969 and 1971 gradually became acute. The official atmosphere in the meantime had become congenial and helpful, which encouraged me to write.

I have not tried to explain away the debacle with an easy excuse of an international conspiracy in our affairs of the last few years. I refuse to plead any international conspiracy. If it was, it was our own fault. Conspiracies only take place when ground is made fertile for them by the people and their leaders. If it was the combined effort of India and Russia which disintegrated Pakistan, Pakistanis surely helped them to do so. It is high time that we stop blaming others for our misfortunes. We must look into our mistakes and failures which made the debacle possible. Our own lack of political wisdom and vision of history and our own indifference to what might be our national interest brought the disintegration. This is the thesis of the book. It gives a detailed

and authentic account of events as they overtook this politically lethargic nation and led it through a bloody nightmare. It lays claims to an honest narration of political, social and military events which took place within Pakistan and as understood by the author.

It is an account of the events up to December, 1971, only and any reference to later events, where made, is to keep the continuity of the narrative. Most of the information used in this book has been obtained from both civil and military officers who participated in the events. I had also had the good fortune to see some official records pertaining to Martial Law and the Army. The verbal accounts have been checked and re-checked from different officers who took part in the same events. I have abstained from passing any judgement or opinions on various events. The narrative itself projects the story and I feel there is no need to sway the reader to one side or the other. At a few places I have indulged in such opinions and they are entirely my own.

I have deliberately avoided any discussion regarding killings, rape or loot for which the armed forces in East Pakistan were vociferously blamed by India and the Indian inspired reports in a section of the foreign information media. The intention is not to overlook or condone them. No Pakistani and particularly the Pakistani soldiers, sailors and airmen would like to condone such actions and would very much demand that they must be enquired into and verified at the highest level, and the culprits, if any, court martialled. At present all the officers and jawans who were blamed for this are held as prisoners of war in India. When they return, we can in the normal military manner arrive at the truth.

It will, however, not be wise to fall in line with the Indian propaganda. Even before launching her military aggression against East Pakistan, India had succeeded in maligning Pakistan through its propaganda campaign at an estimated cost of 12 million sterling. It began by exaggerating claims first, of economic exploitation and then of political exploitation of Dacca by Islamabad, and culminated in accusing the Pakistan Army units, which had operated in East Pakistan of loot, arson, rape and an indiscriminate slaughter of three million unarmed civilians. It was surprising that the fabricated figures of Indian propaganda were uncritically accepted by a section of the world press, thus creating a grossly unjust impression

of Pakistan in the Internationat community. West Pakistan was declared guilty of the genocide of the Bengalis. Objectivity, fairness and even reason went down before a thumping desire to punish and destroy Pakistan.

The propaganda had been planned so thoroughly that when the time came, Indians were ready with this preplanned weapon. For example, a T.V. film was shown in some countries which depicted in detail the arrival of General Tikka Khan in Dacca in March 1971, the way he was shot and his official funeral. Similarly, another T.V. picture contained large scale demolition of famous buildings in Dacca and other towns including the mausoleum of Shah Jalal in Sylhet. Of course, neither General Tikka Khan was shot, nor a brick had been damaged in all those buildings.

The Indian press was publishing fantastic stories of the so-called genocide. The facts about Bengalis killing Biharis and West Pakistanis, the Hindus killing the Muslims and the cold blooded murder of innocent civilians by lawless hooligans calling themselves Awami League Volunteers, were often overlooked or put on the account of the Army. The slaughter of intellectuals became a favourite theme of the Indian propaganda but it was only short-lived. 56 intellectuals who were supposed to have been slaughtered, killed this theme by issuing a joint statement and by appearing on T.V. Similar was the result of the killings of Hindu teachers of Dacca University, who later turned up to perform their duties. When it was appreciated that by any stretch of imagination, the small Pakistan garrison could not have killed so many people the Indian press started bringing in foreign troops friendly to Pakistan to do the job. The *Motherland*, New Delhi on May 5, 1971 had headlined 'Pakistan getting Turks to kill Bengalis.' 'Bangladesh' leaders were vying with Indians by discovering new extent of loss of life in this unfortunate internal conflict.

However, the truth about the so-called slaughter by the Pakistan Army is beginning to unfold itself. The world press is getting wiser to the Indian propaganda and independently analysing the earlier reports. Quotations from two papers would suffice here. First is by William J. Drummond published in the *Los Angelese Times*, June 11, 1972: 'In this reporter's judgement, based on numerous trips around Bangladesh beginning last December and on extensive discussions with many people at the village level as well as

in the Government, the figure of 3 million deaths is an exaggeration so gross as to be absurd.

'The notion that four divisions of Pakistani soldiers operating in a notably backward province could kill 3 million persons and hide the remains in one month is beyond belief.

'The war with India was swiftly lost in two weeks. The Pakistani military was hard pressed during this time and could not have disposed of all those bodies.

'Of course, there are 'mass graves' that have been discovered in districts all over Bangladesh. But nobody not even the most rabid Pakistani-hater, has asserted that all these mass graves account for more than about 1,000 victims.

'Since the third week of March, (1972) when the Inspector General's office in the Bangladesh Home Ministry began its field investigations, there have been about 2,000 complaints from citizens about deaths at the hands of the Pakistani Army.

'If you go to villages in the countryside, it is very difficult to find any persons who have actually seen somebody killed or had a member of their own family killed.'

The second is from *Le Monde*, Paris, as quoted in the *Pakistan Times*, Lahore, dated September 17, 1972: '*Le Monde* said we could not ignore the slaughter of non-Bengalis. Moreover, the figure of 3 million Bengalis, killed or 10 million Bengalis made refugees during the Pakistan Army action could be questioned. According to the inquiry conducted by the Dacca Home Office it was reported that only approximately 3,000 were killed, the paper disclosed.'

Similar is the case with stories of rape. An Indian reporter said in his despatch which appeared in the *New York Times* on January 30, 1972 'that Bangladesh officials put the figures as high as 200,000; most social workers give 60,000 as a conservative estimate, though the Roman Catholic Relief Agency puts it as low as 4,000.' The disparity in these figures is noticeable. It is known that only 10 cases of rape had been reported till August 31, 1971 and culprits tried and punished.

As for the loot, I shall only quote a Pathan orderly who when told about the punishment given to a jawan who had been found with some stolen goods had remarked: 'He is foolish, he will be lucky if he gets away with his life.'

It does not stand to reason that three weak divisions thinly deployed in counter-insurgency role and in addition continuously fighting border battles against Indians and Mukti Bahini's attacks could have found time to do all these things. What was happening to the loot? The precarious communication and infrequent movements between the two wings of Pakistan could not have allowed such loot to land up in West Pakistan. I may quote here from an article '*Struggle against death in refugees camps*' by M. Pierre Bois of the *Daily Le Figaro*, Paris, published in the paper on September 8, 1971. He after visiting India and Pakistan reception camps had burst out 'In this country of legend which is Bengal where is the truth.' This is exactly what we must try to find entirely for our own satisfaction.

My thanks are due to all those officers both civil and military who willingly discussed the events, they had participated in. It is this assistance which made the compilation of this book possible. I am also happy to acknowledge the advice of Commodore (Retired) Maqbool Hussain, who read the manuscript and made a number of useful suggestions and comments. Saeed Ahmad and Muhammad Said Khokhar, particularly the former have helped me in many ways in compiling the various narratives. I am grateful to both of them for their keenness and assistance. Lastly my thanks are also due to Mr. Abdul Hakim for patiently typing and retyping various drafts.

FAZAL MUQEEM KHAN

February 1973
Lahore.

CHAPTER I

BETWEEN TWO WARS

PAKISTAN and India have a number of things in common and the most obvious, perhaps, is their distrust and fear of each other. It stems from bad neighbourly relations spread over a quarter of a century. There is, however, a naked difference. India's hatred is aggressive whereas the sole concern of Pakistan is to hold its own. While the aim of Pakistan is crystal clear, that of India remains concealed under a pall of soft words.

The attitude of confrontation developed owing to 'the ineradicable hatred of the Hindu for the Muslim. This has brought into existence a reciprocating hatred in Pakistan, so that here is now a vicious spiral of hatreds.'[1] Since the two countries became independent in 1947, India's cherished dream has been to undo Pakistan or at least wear it down to a satellite state of India. To quote Mr. Nehru's own words: 'to reincorporate it into an Indian dominated confederation.' For Indians, 'the creation of Pakistan was political expediency of the past which has to be undone in future'.[2]

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1. The *Times*, London, December 21, 1971—Article by Nirad Chaudhuri.
2. V.P. Krishna Menon as quoted by S.M. Zafar, in *Through the Crisis*, p. 181, Book Centre, Lahore.

This burning desire to undo Pakistan is not an emotional urge, alone. It is dictated by the self-interest, as Pakistanis see it, of an ambitious people who wish to be on top. Pakistan, in Indian eyes, stands in the way of fulfilling this ambition. A weak Pakistan will mean unchallenged Indian supremacy, not only in the sub-continent, but also in the regions of the Indian Ocean. It will provide, Indians think, flexibility and freedom in their manoeuvres to reach the top of the world. India without Pakistan is big enough in area and rich enough in resources to become a strong power but they have been made to read their past one thousand years' history as that of down-trodden and oppressed people by 'barbarous forces.'

There is still another important factor in India's continuous and persistent enmity towards Pakistan. India requires uninterrupted political stability for her gradual process of converting a racially and ethnically diverse people into a nation. When internal or external difficulties seem to threaten their political system, the Pakistan bogey is conveniently at hand to be fully exploited. Pakistan, a country one-fifth the size of India, having less than one-tenth of its resources and far inferior in all potentials that spell power and strength, has always been used, with full audacity, to divert the attention of the people from all internal and external failures. Throughout the Sino-Indian conflict, India had kept its major forces facing Pakistan. After India's debacle in NEFA and Ladakh against China in 1962, the blame for her miserable performance was shifted to Pakistan, although Pakistan had remained completely neutral and India's attitude towards Pakistan as her 'enemy number one' was, perhaps, more responsible for India's humiliating defeat.

Faced with this attitude of her big neighbour, Pakistan in obedience to the law of self-preservation, strives to ensure her security, but her efforts to escape from the menace of Indian hegemony are readily dubbed as a 'hate-India campaign.' When Pakistan's voice is raised against the high-handedness of her powerful neighbour, it is drowned in shouts of that 'Indian bogey' again. Pakistan's demands on India to fulfil her agreements, mutual or enjoined by United Nations, are summarily condemned as expressions of a belligerent policy. Any precautions or preparatory measures undertaken by Pakistan to defend her sovereignty and territorial integrity are at once labelled as a prologue to a military attack on India. On the other hand, the phenomenal progress of

India's armaments industry and her frantic purchases of enormous quantities of arms and military equipment from all over the world are passed off as defensive moves to preserve the non-violent and non-aligned policies of a country against its 'treacherous' neighbours. Even India's alignment with other powers does not seem to detract her from a claim of non-alignment.

The continuous Indian pressure against Pakistan has, at times, been unbearable. The big resourceful India is extremely ambitious, openly belligerent and unashamedly expansionist in outlook. Pakistan is comparatively smaller and poorer, as the world knows, but proud of the last one thousand years of the history of its people, and striving hard, against a large number of handicaps, to complete its own consolidation. The Indian pressure has erupted in two open wars, the one in 1947-48 and the other in 1965. The first war liberated enough territory in Kashmir to give refuge to the uprooted Kashmiris. It established the right of self-determination for the people of the old State under the UN auspices, to which both India and Pakistan agreed. The 1965 war saved Pakistan itself from disintegration. It was paradoxical, however, that it also sowed the seeds of Pakistan's dismemberment.

The 1965 war brought India and Pakistan to a cross-road and each took its separate path. India's humiliating defeat in NEFA and Ladakh had given her a severe shock and she was still smarting under wounds suffered from her military debacle. Her easy collapse under China's minor onslaught had surprised the world. The short but intensive Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, where India failed to achieve her aim, ended in a stalemate and brought no glory to the Indian Armed Forces. Instead of gaining in stature, they suffered a further loss of face. It must be admitted that India absorbed the shock admirably and had the democratic institutions to do so. It spurred the Indians, in fact, to a more planned effort. Desperate to restore her prestige, particularly of the Army, India plunged into hectic preparations for another war. She shopped all over the world and, with sympathetic assistance of the major world powers expanded and modernised her Armed Forces. Her already big armament industry was enhanced to bolster up her defence potentials. She used her diplomatic skill to secure as much foreign assistance in material, technical aid and military expertise as she asked. India quickly made up her losses and soon her military capability started moving from strength to strength, and with it her pressure

on her smaller neighbours like Nepal, Sri Lanka and particularly Pakistan became increasingly aggressive. The normalization of Pakistan-China relations added to her fury and she quoted it as a proof of Pak-China collaboration to destroy India. The old Pakistan bogey was revived in more urgent vehemence. But, India had learnt her lesson and it was abundantly clear to her that she would not be able to destroy Pakistan by force of arms only. She, therefore, turned to other methods for achieving her aims.

Pakistan was no longer the same Pakistan after the war with India in 1965. The life and thought of the people changed. There was a new awakening. Pakistan was blooded and hearts were afire. There was an urgent and aggressive demand for progress in both economic and political fields. The dynamism of the situation eluded the rulers. The existing political institutions were not flexible enough and no attempts were made to adjust them and absorb the just aspirations of the people. Even those who had reconciled to the current political system in the name of stability began having second thoughts, and its suitability for geographically divided country in two parts with about a thousand miles of hostile India in between was smothered in doubt.

Pakistan, on the other hand, failed to achieve its economic stability after the 1965 war. Soon afterwards, the country was rocked with internal turmoil and the new government could not provide all the answers for her economic ills. The sources of her foreign aid, too, dried up for some time. Consequently, the weapons and major equipment of defence weakened. The Armed Forces suffered the most. They, also, suffered because they failed to learn the lessons of weaknesses brought out in the 1965 conflict. They were deliberately suppressed and any public comment was quickly crushed. Pakistan's leaders at the time followed the same old methods and continued to search for security in one dimensional sphere. They refused to probe into the changes recently wrought in the country and derive the correct lessons from them.

East Pakistan had been in the forefront of the Pakistan movement and Muslim League, the party which later led the Pakistan movement, was formed in Dacca. There was more unanimity of opinion about Pakistan amongst Bengalis than amongst West Pakistanis. The Bengalis were most enthusiastic about the new country but great wisdom, patience and political sagacity was

required to keep the two parts together after the early emotions and sentiments had cooled off. After the death of the Quaid-i-Azam, Father of the Nation, and Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister, and the gradual disappearance from the scene of national figures like Nishtar, Suhrawardy, Maulana Akram Khan and Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan, those left to guide the destinies of the country failed to achieve unity and integration. The sense of partiotism and the urge for political co-operation, achieved during the fight for Pakistan at a great cost, were soon frittered away. Misunderstandings started early. Many forces sprang up to air them but only a few to diffuse them. Instead of emphasizing the many points of unity amongst the two wings, differences were allowed to come to the fore. Political and social institutions which could foster the unity of the two wings never came into being. The intellectual approach to meet this problem was altogether missing.

It will be interesting to compare at the time of Independence the potentials of the two wings for economic development. Both had been exploited by the British but in different ways. In East Pakistan, the material wealth was drained out leaving the people poor and suffering. In West Pakistan, manpower was exploited for the army and the subordinate civil services. While exploiting manpower, it would have been unwise to harm the tribal chiefs or the tribal code of '*Izzat*' and '*ghairat*'. In fact, it was in the interest of the ruling race to strengthen the hold of the chiefs over their tribes. As a result, by 1947 when Independence was ushered, East Pakistan had developed into a classless society, while West Pakistan had remained typically feudal. On account of their turbulent past, East Pakistanis were denied entry into the services, so much so that in 1947 there was only one East Pakistani in the Old Indian Civil Service. Their presence in the higher ranks of the police was more of an exception. West Pakistanis, being the loyal citizens of British India, were freely taken into all services.

Again, except for slow moving river communications and the meagre network of railways, East Pakistan had remained a closed country. No need was felt for opening up the country: firstly, because all its resources were taken into Calcutta to feed its vast industry and population, and secondly, the region where East Pakistan lay had not been in the path of British military strategy. West Pakistan on the other hand, was almost a border area of the British Empire, next door to Russia. There was, therefore, need

for communications and free movement of armies through the region. The road and railway system which West Pakistan inherited was purely strategic, having been designed to meet the British requirements of Imperial Defence. It, however, came handy as part of the infra-structure for future development of this part.

Both wings were industrially most backward. The main differences were, firstly that whereas Muslims in West Pakistan also owned some industry and business, in East Pakistan, with the exception of some business in Chittagong, both were entirely in the hands of Hindu minority. Secondly, whereas in East Pakistan the technicians and other workers were also Hindus, the only traditional Muslim craftsmen of East Pakistan being the famous weavers of Demra and Tangail, in the Western Wing, a majority of the technicians and workers were Muslims. After Independence, there were hardly any Muslims in East Pakistan who could take advantage of the political changes for industrial development. On the other hand, some of the Muslim senior and educated craftsmen in West Wing were intelligent and enterprising enough to comprehend the change. They took full advantage of it along with other industrialists and businessmen. They not only took over the industry left by Hindus, but started new ones. A considerable amount of light engineering, sports goods, medical instruments and cutlery, fan manufacturing and similar industries in and around Lahore, Gujranwala, Gujrat and Sialkot owe their existence to the foresight and enterprise of these workers.

East Pakistanis, also, showed certain prejudices against foreign capital and capitalists, particularly Muslim. The families like Adamjees, Bawanys, Ispahanis and others who established their business and contributed most to the industrialization of East Pakistan were all from India. The few West Pakistani families who did so, had also moved from India where they had been in business, but they were all dubbed as West Pakistanis. The West Wing had no such inhibitions. After the Independence of the Indian sub-continent, stirrings of freedom had also started in the countries of the Indian Ocean region and, apprehending their future, some of the Muslim families, who had migrated there desired to shift their capital and families to Pakistan. While they were discouraged from doing so in East Pakistan, West Pakistan gave them full facilities. Most of the development in Karachi and Hyderabad owes a great deal to their capital and enterprise. A large majority

of the so-called richest families of West Pakistan were not originally Pakistanis.

By 1965, East Pakistanis had begun to get disillusioned. The national elections for various tiers culminated in the Presidential elections at the beginning of 1965, in which they tried hard to defeat Field Marshal Ayub Khan and his party nominees. Their failure subdued them, but it proved to them that East Pakistan would not be able to get political power under the existing political system. Ironically, the Field Marshal, who had done so much for the development of East Pakistan, was also inadvertently responsible for strengthening the secessionist forces within the province. The constitution he produced assured East Pakistanis that they had the least chance of securing political power. The feeling about all the injustices, some real and other imagined, started becoming acute. Then came the war in 1965, and East Pakistanis' thinking and behaviour were influenced by it much more than those of West Pakistanis. It is not appreciated sufficiently that besides the Islamic connection, the other powerful bond between the two wings of Pakistan was the armed forces, the symbol of security—the majority element of which still belonged to the Western Wing. They were the biggest agents of national integration and East Pakistanis had complete confidence in their strength and prowess. They had complete faith that under the umbrella provided by them, East Pakistan would always remain secure. But, the way the war ended and the undue credit given to China for the security of East Pakistan had far reaching effect on the thought and actions of East Pakistanis. For the first time since Independence in 1947, they felt insecure and helpless. The *bonafides* and efficacy of a strong Centre became suspect in their eyes. The country's strategy of fighting main battles in the west no longer satisfied them. And the feeling of uneasiness and loneliness produced by the war started taking root. The persistent extremists and alien propaganda revived wounds and made the people more vocal. The complaints against the Central Government and the Western half of the country became acute and intense. No initiative was taken to remove the misgivings of East Pakistanis.

It is sad to record that all Governments at the Centre, even those in which East Pakistanis wielded power, failed to arrest the growing feelings amongst East Pakistanis of the many injustices done to them. East and West Pakistanis made no effort to

understand each other. It seems that they met each other but never comprehended what was in each other's mind. During the twenty-five years' history of Pakistan, no serious step was taken towards integration. There are, on the other hand, many instances of Government policies and actions which tended towards the disintegration of the country. The Government case, therefore, went by default, so did that of the Western Wing. No literature and no white papers were ever issued, and the Government's information media miserably failed. The great strides made in social and economic fields in East Pakistan remained unappreciated. One of the major political results was the emergence of the Six Point Programme of autonomy which was presented by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in February 1966 while addressing the All Pakistan National Conference in Lahore. They landed as a bomb-shell on the political fields of Pakistan. They were:—

Point No. 1

The character of the Government shall be Federal and Parliamentary in which the election to the Federal Legislature and to the Legislatures of the Federating Units shall be direct and on the basis of universal adult franchise. The representation in the Federal Legislature shall be on the basis of population.

Point No. 2

The Federal Government shall be responsible only for Defence and Foreign Affairs and, subject to the conditions provided in (3) below, currency.

Point No. 3

There shall be two separate currencies mutually or freely convertible in each wing for each region, or in the alternative a single currency, subject to the establishment of a Federal Reserve System in which there will be regional Federal Reserve Banks which shall devise measures to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to the other.

Point No. 4

Fiscal policy shall be the responsibility of the Federating Units. The Federal Government shall be provided with requisite

revenue resources which would be automatically appropriable by the Federal Government in the manner provided and on the basis of the ratio to be determined by the procedure laid down in the Constitution. Such Constitutional provisions would ensure that the Federal Government's revenue requirements are met consistently with the objective of ensuring control over the fiscal policy by the Governments of the Federal Units.

Point No. 5

Constitutional provisions shall be made to enable separate accounts to be maintained of the foreign exchange earnings of each of the Federating Units, under the control of the respective Governments of the Federating Units. The foreign exchange requirements of the Federal Government shall be met by the Governments of the Federating Units on the basis of a ratio to be determined in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Constitution to negotiate foreign trade and aid within the framework of the foreign policy of the country, which shall be the responsibility of the Federal Government.

Point No. 6

The Governments of the Federating Units shall be empowered to maintain a militia or a para-military force in order to contribute effectively towards national security.

As a result of the 1965 war, the tempo of development had slowed down for a period as it did in the Western Wing but by that time and during the following few years, the Province had developed so much and its rate of development was so satisfactory that India and the neighbouring Indian Bengal became envious. India, indeed, showed signs of worry about the speed of development and standard of living in East Pakistan, as it exposed her plight in Indian Bengal.

India had from the start followed two clear policies in her dealings with Pakistan. In brief, this dual policy amounted to extending friendship towards East Pakistan or an open door policy, while following a policy of persistent confrontation against West Pakistan. The Nehru-Liaquat Pact of 1947 about the transfer of population from certain areas of India and Pakistan had not been

applied to East Pakistan. The later evacuee property laws enforced by the two Governments did not disturb the *status quo* in respect of Indian and Pakistani Bengal and Assam. As a result, while after 1947 almost all the national wealth of West Pakistan came into the hands of the Muslims, 80% of the national wealth including most of its existing industry, trade and commerce and even services and professions in East Pakistan remained in the hands of an already rich Hindu minority, although a large number of their families and their bases had moved into India. The majoirty portion of the income of 80 per cent of the national wealth held by Hindus, ended up in India and none of it was reinvested in East Pakistan. For example, by 1965 the two running Dakeshwari Textile Mills in Dacca did not have enough money in Pakistan to pay the provident fund dues of their employees. They had drawn more loans from the banks than the book value of the mills. On the other hand the Saigols, after moving from Calcutta in 1947, started their industrial ventures by establishing a textile mill at Lyallpur in West Pakistan and by reinvesting their profits, had risen to the status of one of the richest families of the country. This was equally true of the other twenty richest families of Pakistan.

The wealth drain from East Pakistan into India was enormous and remained uncontrolled. This was clearly brought out when the Army was called in to launch anti-smuggling operations known as Operation Jute in 1952, Operation Service First in 1956 and Operation Closed Door in 1957. The first operation succeeded in stopping the annual smuggling of 800,000 bales of jute into India. Within a month of the second operation, the food situation in the province was stabilized and 90,000 maunds of rice, a large quantity of imported commodities and gold and silver bullion was captured in the process of being smuggled. During the last operation, which was allowed to last only two weeks, goods including gold and silver bullion worth 100 million rupees were seized. These were only momentary reliefs. The wealth of East Pakistan continued to be drained into India. According to expert estimates 750 to 800 million rupees in terms of foreign exchange was taken out of the province by Hindus annually.

There was free movement between the two Bengals and the Hindu minority of East Pakistan could transfer wealth from East Pakistan to India, so much so that even in times of national emergencies like floods and cyclones, while no train or vehicle could

move between East and West Pakistan over Indian road and rail system, India was allowed free movement on the East Pakistan Railways and the river communication system between the Indian States of Bengal and Assam and Tripura. And, she continued to enjoy this concession until as late as September, 1965.

This open door and friendly policy offered manifold advantages to India and she utilized them fully. The field of education suffered a worse fate. At the time of Independence, '95 per cent of the 1290 high schools and 47 colleges in East Bengal were privately organised and financed by Hindus.'* Those of the younger generation, who grew up in Pakistan, and were educated in these institutions and under the guidance of Hindu teachers with course books produced in India were freely fed with Indian propaganda. Gradually in the absence of authentic information to the contrary to mould their minds, East Pakistanis and particularly the young men amongst them started accepting the Indian propaganda lines. The Pakistan cause came to be connected with West Pakistan only. Thus the internal dissensions were being fostered to destroy Pakistan, and regional affinities were being encouraged and Pakistani patriotism downgraded. The seeds of the crisis between East and West Pakistan, sown by professors and teachers of the minority community, yielded a flourishing crop. In twenty-four years, the type of education imparted to them together with insistent Indian propaganda changed the East Pakistani Muslims to Bengalis. A considerable section of young East Pakistan was therefore the first to break away from Pakistan and its basis.

With the conditions prevailing in East Pakistan and the lesson learnt in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965—that Pakistan could not be destroyed by armed forces alone—India seized her opportunity. Where the Pakistan Government failed to meet the emotional and sentimental requirements of East Pakistan, India filled the vacuum. India moved in, in a big way, after the 1965 war. While enumerating India's breaches of the Tashkent Agreement, in the Pakistan National Assembly on June 3, 1966, Mr. Z.A. Bhutto, then Foreign Minister, had charged India among other things with 'encouragement of secessionist propaganda in East Pakistan'. India carried on her propaganda through all known means. The information media, literature, plays, whispering campaigns, and trained agents

* S.M. Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and Birth of Pakistan* p 327, Ashraf, Lahore.

were used. Between 1965 and 1970, the minority community was conspicuous by its absence on the political arena of East Pakistan and was cleverly concentrating on cultural activities. During this time, 'cultural' organizations suddenly sprang up all over East Pakistan, even in small towns. Their function was subversion but they received the blessings of both the Provincial and Central Governments: both were fully aware of these activities, but the former would not act and the latter did not move.

All this alien subversion turned a section of the people to look up to India as their saviour. The relentless Indian intelligence offensive soon linked up with them and other local anti-national elements. These dark activities were exposed to the public in January 1968, in the shape of the 'Agartala Conspiracy'. 35 persons, including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and some civil and armed forces officers, were put on trial on June 19, 1968 and were charged with plotting to deprive Pakistan of its sovereignty over a part of its territory by an armed revolt with weapons, ammunition and funds provided by India. The aim of the conspiracy was to set up an independent government recognized by India in the captured territories in East Pakistan. The diary of Lieut-Commander Muazzam, one of the accused, which was seized, was revealing and foretold the events that took place later during March, 1971. Its first page had a map of Bangladesh, with its flag. Second page contained the national anthem to be adopted and following pages were covered with the outline plan of action to be taken including the method of attack on cantonments in East Pakistan. The map, the flag and the national anthem were the same as adopted in March, 1971, the plan for attacks on cantonments was also followed.

President Ayub Khan fell seriously ill on February 10, 1968. The Speaker of the National Assembly who, according to the Constitution, should have become Acting President, was kept out of this office. Even after the President's recovery and resumption of the reins of government, it became clear that his hold on the country's affairs was weakening. The opposition to him, which had gradually been building up, after the cease-fire at the end of September 1965, and particularly after the Tashkent Agreement, became more vocal and agitational. The inconclusiveness of the war and secretiveness of the agreement were bound to produce political repercussions. The impact of the Tashkent Agreement was not uniform in both wings of the country. There were popular demonstrations against

it in West Pakistan, resulting in police firings and two deaths but East Pakistan generally accepted it. East Pakistanis were engrossed in their own grievances. The cumulative political, social, financial, economic and cultural injustices which in their view East Pakistan had suffered since Independence, were being highlighted. The Agartala Conspiracy trial provoked adverse reactions and whispers about trumped up charges received credence. The accused persons began acquiring an image of heroes and fighters for East Pakistan's rights.

With the weakening hold of Field Marshal Ayub Khan on the country's affairs, the opposition was closing in on him. Very soon it appeared that his own Government had begun to lose confidence in itself. Realizing the strength of the opposition to the existing political system and the dangerous turn the agitation was taking, President Ayub Khan agreed to call a round table conference of the political leaders representing various opposition parties. The Pakistan People's Party and the National Awami Party (Bhashani group) disassociated themselves from the round table conference and did not participate in any of its deliberations.

The President also agreed to release Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was still under trial in the Agartala Conspiracy case, on parole to allow him to attend the conference. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had agreed and was prepared to do so while on parole but certain West Pakistani politicians insisted that charges against him should be withdrawn first. The President remained adamant in his refusal to withdraw the treason case against him. In order to convince the leaders of the authenticity of the charges, he arranged to brief them on the case and show them the proofs which the Government possessed. All leaders were convinced of the crime but the vocal amongst them still contended that political considerations demanded his release. In order to clear the ground for an end to the growing agitation and in view of the attitude of the political leaders, the President agreed to repeal the Criminal Law Amendment (Special Tribunal) Ordinance, 1968 under which the case was being tried, thus dropping the prosecution. It is interesting to note that the charges were not withdrawn. Mr. Mujibur Rahman or any other accused never bothered to clear himself of the charges before any Court. A day before that, on February 21, the President announced his decision not to contest the Presidential elections in

1970. He had been motivated in taking this decision to stand aside for the following reasons: (a) That this will improve the chances of a peaceful transfer of power and (b) That by this decision the course leading to Martial Law might be avoided.*

Mujibur Rahman, on his earlier release from jail on parole, was given a hero's welcome in Dacca. Now he emerged as the most popular leader of the Province and the supreme champion of East Pakistani aspirations. In the absence of any commanding figure, most of the opposition leaders who had merged into a united front during the agitation started falling apart, once the round table conference had been called and political power was in sight. The sense of urgency that the situation demanded was altogether missing. While the nation was in a state of tension, and the law and order situation had almost reached the breaking point—there were reports of trials and executions from East Pakistan by so-called peoples courts—the leaders were dragging their feet. At last about a month after the President's initiative, the conference met in earnest on March 10, for four days. All the leaders, one after another voiced their feelings about the current situation and put up their demands. Regional issues again predominated and no agreed formula for the restoration of democracy was put forward. The Field Marshal accepted both demands on which there was consensus of opinion—adult franchise and a parliamentary form of government. He, however, declined to accept the provincial and regional demands which had already been settled before he had come into power. He maintained that they should be referred to directly elected representatives of the people. The leaders attending the conference looked happy and congratulated the President on his sagacity and patriotism. Still the conference failed and the leaders went out of it more divided than before. The main differences, which came to the fore, were between the Awami League of Mr. Mujibur Rahman and others. By refusing to comprehend what was so obvious, the warring politicians failed to avert the country's relapse into a dictatorship, worse than that of President Ayub Khan. The disagreement at this critical juncture put the political clock of the country back instead of advancing it and paved the way for a more unrepresentative government. It was a sad commentary on the Field Marshal's ten-year rule that most of the political leaders whose misrule and misdeeds during the first decade

* S.M. Zafar, *Through the Crisis.*, p. 5, Book Centre, Lahore.

of freedom had helped to bring him to power had now succeeded in destroying him. He then appeared a nearly shattered man who had no grip over the situation. According to the constitution he should have handed over his office to the Speaker, which he failed to do. The failure of the round table conference had produced a political vacuum in which General Yahya Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Army managed to be called in. Once again Martial Law was proclaimed in the country on March 25, 1969 and a few days later General Yahya Khan also installed himself as the President of Pakistan.

CHAPTER II

PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT 1969-71

IN order to understand the events during 1969-71, it is essential for the reader to be acquainted with the way the Government functioned. After his first speech, as President and Chief Martial Law Administrator, General Yahya Khan is reported to have sat down holding his head in dismay and woefully remarked: 'What should we do now?' To Pakistan's misfortune, during his two years and nine months of absolute dictatorship, he neither produced an answer nor allowed any one else to find one for him.

On the imposition of Martial Law on March 25, 1969, the President was removed and Constitution was abrogated. Headquarters (HQ) Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA), headed by Major General (later Lieutenant General) S.G.M. Peerzada as Principal Staff Officer (PSO) to the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator, was immediately formed and placed supreme over the entire existing civil machinery of the Government. The heads of departments and branches at the Government Secretariat lost all

DISTRIBUTION OF DUTIES—HEADQUARTERS CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR

PSO to the President and CMLA

GSO-I (Staff Officer to PSO)

Brigadier Martial Law Affairs | **Secretary Public Affairs** | **Brigadier Civil Affairs**

Brigadier Civil Affairs

GSO-I (CA-1)

a. Cabinet Division (less Intelligence Bureau)
b. Establishment Division
c. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
d. Ministry of Defence
e. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
f. Parliamentary Affairs Division
g. Study Group of HQ CMLA.

GSO-I (CA-2)

a. Planning Division
b. Economic Affairs Division
c. Ministry of Finance
d. Ministry of Commerce
e. Ministry of Industries and Natural Resources
f. Ministry of Agriculture and Works
g. Rehabilitation Division.

Brigadier Martial Law Affairs

GSO-1 (ML-1)

a. All ML legal work (less that undertaken by Judge Advocate General).
b. 303 suspended officers cases.
c. ML enquiries and investigations.

GSO-1 (LM-2)

a. ML Administration, organization and establishment.
b. ML conferences and liaison.
c. Miscellaneous petitions/complaints.

GSO-1 (ML-3)

a. ML Operations and Intelligence.
b. Intelligence Bureau and Inter-Services Intelligence reports.
c. National Security Council.
d. Political Activities under Martial Law Regulations (MLRs).
e. Violations of MLRs.

GSO-1 (ML-4)

a. Ministry of Home, Kashmir Affairs, States and Frontier Region.
b. Ministry of Communications.
c. Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare and Family Planning.
d. Ministry of Education and Scientific Research.

direct approach to the President. The set-up at HQ CMLA, and subjects assigned to its various branches are shown in the chart.

The President of Pakistan has two types of staff in his Secretariat. Firstly, the Personal Staff, which consists of the Military Secretary (Major General) to the President, the ADCs and the President's House Staff. Secondly, the Public Staff headed by a Secretary of the Government, for the in-coming and out-going Government work which is submitted to the President which became subordinate to the Principal Staff Officer to the CMLA and President, and lost all its importance.

The formation of HQ CMLA consisting of Armed Forces Officers was not intended to be a temporary affair to get over the serious law and order situation in the country. Its establishment as a permanent supreme governing authority in the country was a deliberate move. It was meant to ensure that all the business at the Centre and in the Provinces would be conducted, and decisions taken on cases would be studied and filtered, through the Military Staff at their Headquarters. It was maintained, firstly, that the reason why the Martial Law Administration in 1958 had become ineffective and discredited was the existence of a system of parallel chains of command of the Martial Law Administration and the Civil authority. Secondly, that civilian officers at that time, while ostensibly supporting Martial Law, had first undermined, then eroded and finally completely negated the efforts of the military power in the field of administration. It was also thought that a large portion of the civil services would strongly resent the loss of power, patronage and opportunity for corruption, which would naturally result from the imposition of Martial Law. Therefore, they would do everything in their power to demonstrate that it was impossible to govern without the civil services being the sole instrument of administration. The MLAs were, therefore, duly warned that civil officers would attempt by-passing the Martial Law authorities and going straight to the President and the Govern[illegible] As a result, the Military Branch placed there would again w[illegible] away and finally perish, as it did in 1959. They were advised that [illegible] was important that no decision of any consequence at the Secretaria[illegible] level, either at the Centre or in the Provinces, should be take[illegible] without the knowledge of the CMLA and the MLAs or their head-quarters staff. The Principal Staff Officer to the President a[illegible] CMLA had remarked at one of the conferences in April 19[illegible]

which was presided over by the President himself: "We took the blame last time when everything was done by the civilians. This time we will do everything and take the credit too."

The procedure on which the different sections at HQ CMLA worked was that the files would come to the President's Secretariat after the summary for the President had been prepared and vetted by the appropriate Ministries. The Secretary of the Public Staff at the President's House would sort out the files and deliver them to the ML Sections concerned. G-Is would process the files and put them up to their Brigadiers who would pass them on to the PSO. After the President's decision, they would go back by the same route till they arrived in the Ministries concerned. G-Is would only check the staff side of the work and normally prepare the gist or resume of the summaries of the cases, which tended to be very long in the civil Secretariat as compared to those of the military. If there were any local clarifications on any thing not known or clear to G-Is, they would ask the Deputy Secretary of the Branch concerned who would provide necessary papers and all the information required. In some cases, Joint Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries would be summoned to HQ CMLA to answer queries and clear doubts. After this process had been completed, orders would eventually be obtained on the files, which normally said, "Yes", "No" or "Approved". In brief, the Brigadiers at the HQ CMLA became super secretaries and the Government Secretaries naturally tried to remain on their right side. Whatever little morale of the proud civil services still remained was later destroyed by suspending 303 civilian officers of various ranks. Originally 1500 names had been recommended for dismissal by the Centre and the provinces which was reduced to 450 and still later to 303 by Martial Law authorities. On the recommendation of the Chief Justice, charges against these officers were given to them and special tribunals were instituted to hear their appeals. The civilian officers, as a result of the suspension of so many of their colleagues, lost all their initiative. Of course, they were not deliberately obstructive; they could hardly afford to do so under the existing circumstances, but they contributed very little.

Just after the declaration of Martial Law on March 25, 1969, Mr. Arshad Hussain an ex-Foreign Minister, Admiral A.R. Khan, ex-Defence and Home Minister and Mr. Fida Hassan, a senior Civil Service officer and ex-adviser to the last President, had manoeuvred

to get themselves appointed as Advisers to the new President and CMLA. But he sensed the adverse reaction in the country and the Services because of their connections with the previous government and cancelled the order before the notice of their appointment was published. On March 26, the Ministries were divided under four heads: Defence; Home Affairs; Social, comprising Health, Labour, Family Planning and Social Welfare; and Development, comprising Finance, Planning, Economic Affairs,, Industry and Commerce. The President took over Defence and the other divisions were distributed among the three Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrators. General Abdul Hamid Khan, Chief of Staff Army was allotted Home Affairs and of the remaining two Air Marshal Nur Khan, Commander-in-Chief Air Force, with the consent of Admiral S.M. Ahsan, Commander-in-Chief Navy, was allowed to make the first choice and he selected Social Ministry. The Chief of Staff Army and the two Commanders-in-Chief formed the Council of Administration but everything was controlled by the CMLA through HQ CMLA.

In September 1969, the Council of Administration was wound up and the President appointed Ministers at the Centre who functioned till February 24, 1971. The Ministers were nominated, represented no one except themselves, and were responsible to the President only. They were not from amongst the best or most qualified men available. However, it was not the men but the jobs that were unimportant; any stooge could have done them. Their effectiveness under the system was limited. The senior Civil Service officers recognising this, gave them little support—they knew where the power lay. At cabinet meetings routine business of the state was transacted, but the voice of the ministers only carried volume, not force. The decisive decisions were the preserve of the military brass and a few trusted civil servants.

Governors were appointed in the two Provinces in August 1969. The reason for their appointment given at the time was to strengthen the provincial administration and to give the people of the region an assurance of the regime's good will. But this event also came through by design and not by necessity. General Yahya Khan as C-in-C, Army, and Air Marshal Nur Khan as C-in-C, Air Force, never had happy relations. Yahya had, therefore, been keen to have a more pliable personality at the head of the Air Force. These relations became more strained on Nur Khan's appointment

as Deputy CMLA and a member of the Council of Administration. The real problem which now arose was that there was no unanimity of outlook among the senior military men. Yahya, Hamid and Peerzada wanted to hasten slowly. Nur Khan wanted to change basic things and bring about reforms of a far-reaching character—this required at least a short period of military rule. Ahsan wanted elections as soon as possible and handing over of political power to the elected representatives of the people. By August, Yahya Khan could stand no more of Nur Khan and his progressive ideas. He threw the bait of the Governorship of West Pakistan to Nur Khan and to make the bait more attractive, Admiral Ahsan was detailed, under strong protest by him, as Governor of East Pakistan. Against the advice of a number of his friends, Nur Khan willingly walked into the trap. It must be said for Nur Khan, that he accepted the appointment in good faith, in the strong belief that he could really do something worthwhile for the Province. However, he did not last long as Governor. Everything he wanted to do and every step he took to liberalize the policies were objected to by HQ CMLA. Against daily mounting irritations, Nur Khan at last resigned at the end of January 1971, after about five months of occupying the office of Governor of West Pakistan.

After the appointment of Governors in August 1969, their responsibilities and those of the MLAs were defined. The two Governors were Military Officers who, before assumption of their new appointments, were Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrators (DCMLAs), members of the Council of Administration as well as Commanders-in-Chief of the Navy and the Air Force respectively. On appointment as Governors they were placed on retired list. In an effort to further downgrade their position, a new Order of Precedence was published, placing the two Governors below the new C-in-Cs of Navy and Air Force and even below the order of precedence of Chief of Staff Army and Martial Law Administrators of zones, outside their respective regions. They were not made MLAs nor given any overriding powers over the MLAs of the zones. The Martial Law functions remained with the military commanders of the respective areas, who reported directly to the HQ CMLA in Rawalpindi.

The Governors became responsible for the Civil Administration and the MLAs were only to provide Martial Law support to them as and when required in dealing with specific problems. In addition,

the MLAs had to keep the CMLA informed whether the policies laid down by the CMLA were being implemented by the Civil Administration. The actual operation of the Civil Administration in the provinces was entrusted entirely to the Governors. At the same time, as far as the people were concerned the ultimate responsibility rested with the Martial Law Administration. It was assumed that MLAs would not influence the day-to-day administration in the Provinces and it would be the Governors' task to maintain the good image of Martial Law. The foundations were thus laid for parallel governments at the provincial level. Such a dyarchy could run smoothly only if the Governor and the MLA and their various staff members could mutually agree on their various functions. There was, of course, no such ambiguity at the Centre. The channel of command for the conduct of business in all matters relating to the Civil Administration from the Governors to the President worked through the HQ CMLA or the Ministries concerned. It meant that what did not come direct to the HQ CMLA from the Provinces came through the Ministries. This Headquarters continued to function as the President's Secretariat as before. The directive defining the responsibilities of the Governors and MLAs further emphasized that 'HQ CMLA will have the authority to deal with the Governors as well as MLAs on any matters.' The HQ CMLA, therefore assumed the authority to by-pass Ministries or Secretariats of Government and even the Armed Forces Headquarters.

The system of super-government in the form of HQ CMLA gradually destroyed the existing decision-processing institutions and did not utilize properly what was left of them. Things ran tolerably well during the first year of Martial Law, but when the pressures started mounting, the edifice of government gradually cracked and later broke down. There were no institutions left to act as cushions to absorb the shock of events. When the problems of administration multiplied and got crowded around HQ CMLA, new and ad-hoc ways of dealing with them were devised. In such cases HQ CMLA gave no directions or clear-cut policy, nor did it decentralise any of the power concentrated there. Only committees of an *ad hoc* type were formed, but they were given neither the power to take decisions nor the tools to implement them. They sat, they talked and they dispersed. The first of the type was popularly known as the Secretaries' Conference. It came into existence just after the military action in East Pakistan and its meetings

used to be held daily at the GHQ, presided over by General Abdul Hamid Khan, Chief of Staff, Army, in his official capacity as number two to Yahya Khan. The President presided over it only once a week. This conference was attended by the Foreign, Defence and Information Secretaries, the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), the Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (DGISI), and the Director of Intelligence Bureau (DIB), and by the Navy and Air Force Chiefs when they happened to be in Rawalpindi. Other concerned officers were also called in when required. Its purpose was to discuss matters arising out of the military action. The subjects ranged from provision of food, transport, Press censorship, publicity and problems of civil government. In a way this body of officers was made responsible for sorting out the miscreants in East Pakistan. This conference worked in a vacuum without any fixed policy, almost on a day-to-day basis. In fact, it became the Central Government. It had no direct contact with the President though, except once a week when he participated in its deliberations. Perhaps the Chief of Staff, Army took notes and talked to the President. After sometime, the frequency of the meetings was reduced to three times a week, then to two, and ultimately they fizzled out in July 1971. One question which cropped up at all its meetings was as to who would implement the decisions taken. It was suggested that some one from HQ CMLA must be there to take down notes as the Provincial Governments were taking orders only from there. Therefore, Major General Ghulam Umar, National Security Chief, was included. He was not much of a help as he in practice was not a part of HQ CMLA. However, this meeting did act as a forum where things could be discussed, but it did not know what to do with the decisions. One advantage of this meeting was that the Secretaries met one another and at least mutually discussed their problems. After its termination this advantage, too, was lost.

In the meantime, after the dissolution of the Cabinet in February, 1971, Secretaries were allowed to meet the President once a week. Now they became a sort of cabinet. The agenda used to be compiled by the Cabinet Division of the Government and would generally relate to minor problems like cultural pacts, exchange of students and so on. For example, once it was proposed that the stars given to recipients of Civil Awards had sharp edges, which should be blunted. Mr. Rabb, an East Pakistani officer who was then the Secretary for Planning, while supporting the proposal,

argued that at banquets in foreign countries, when the star-holders danced, these stars would brush against the breasts of their partners and hurt them. No problem relating to East Pakistan was discussed at these meetings.

At one stage the Information Secretary suggested that they must have a forum where the problems of East Pakistan could be discussed. The Cabinet Secretary was asked to get the President's permission to do so. For ten days he could not meet the President. After that, the consent of the President was obtained, and it was decided to form a committee for the purpose. It was presided over by the Defence Adviser and included the Cabinet, Foreign, Information and Industries Secretaries, and an officer of the Cabinet Division, the DGISI and the DIB. Its charter was to discuss problems arising out of the army action in East Pakistan and the action required for the support of the Army, and to keep the administration there going. Nothing about political matters was to be discussed. Again the meeting boiled down to discussing minor problems. Certainly no policy matters were discussed. This meeting did not have any means of finding out what was exactly happening in East Pakistan. The DGISI was, therefore. detailed to give ten minutes' briefing at the start of the meetings. The impression left on the minds of the people attending these meetings was that everything was fine and under control. The Committee or its members were never allowed to meet the President. The only officer who met him was the Information Secretary, and he did so once a fortnight on his own initiative in order to get orders on publicity.

The only preplanned committee was the Emergency Committee which came into existence in November 1971, just after the Indian invasion of East Pakistan. It was presided over by the Defence Adviser, and the Secretaries of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Industries, Commerce, Cabinet and Information, Chief of the Joint Secretariat and Armed Services representatives were members. Its function, in short, was to deal with the war effort in its various aspects in the civil sector. It met daily and sometimes twice a day and produced good results. But it was handicapped by lack of higher direction. It only based its deliberation on the information of war which was almost the same as given to the press.

As far as the Armed Services were concerned, the President was the C-in-C of the Army and also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Therefore no new procedures were required and the President used to deal with them directly. Their cases were supposed to come to the Military Secretary to the President through the Ministry of Defence, and to be put up to the President for orders. In practice, however, this procedure was by-passed frequently. As a result, the Navy suffered most because of its remoteness from Rawalpindi and because its Commander-in-Chief lacked the qualities required for friendly relations with General Yahya Khan. The gentle Admiral was a type of man who could not be the President's companion in boozing and other after-sunset activities. However, the command of the Army, compared to the other two services, was completely ambiguous. Yahya had remained C-in-C, but being pre-occupied with other state and personal affairs, did not function as such and delegated his powers as C-in-C to Chief of Staff, Army. Normally, Principal Staff Officers and certain senior officers at the GHQ have direct access to the C-in-C, but this was no longer possible after Yahya had become the President and shifted the centre of his activities to the President's House. Having moved to the President's House within the first week of his taking over the country, he gradually became remote from the GHQ and unapproachable to the Principal Staff Officers and other important functionaries at the GHQ except the Chief of Staff, Army. He in fact left everything to the latter, who became the C-in-C for all practical purposes. Thus there was a C-in-C who did not function as such. The consequences of such ambiguity were obivious and created confusion.

The only channels through which the GHQ could now approach the C-in-C was the Chief of Staff, Army. And although General Abdul Hamid Khan was the C-in-C for all purposes and had been delegated the powers of that office but he did not use them. Hamid had a good mind and also showed clear vision at times, but his besetting weakness was complete lack of the power of decision. As one of his close associates remarked: "He was weak and had no courage to say 'boo' to anyone." He tended to let things take their course. The files, after having been properly processed, reached him for decision, which he did not take. On certain issues he promised to give a decision the next day. Every one knew that they were taken to the President after sunset and discussed over a glass of whisky. Some came back blank, others with decisions

made by the Chief of Staff according to the lines given by the President and perhaps some members of the coterie present at that time. Under the circumstances the GHQ looked up to the Chief of the General Staff, Lieut General Gul Hassan who, with all his exterior toughness, had a tinge of weakness in him. Although he had some originality of ideas, and did not worry much about details, he had one overriding quality: he was a spirited man, appreciated new ideas, moved and wanted things done. He could only go upto the Chief of Staff, Army, who later started giving ear to the Quartermaster General, Major General A.O. Mitha for even some General Staff matters like training and operations. So the things again reverted to the inner circle, the coterie and other close advisers of the President. Gradually the disavantages of having the same persons as the head of the armed forces and the civil administration became evident. Anomalies in the command and control of armed forces became clear. This state of affairs persisted and, instead of any improvement, it further declined and created widespread resentment and insecurity in the army. Such a situation was fraught with instability and ripe for revolution and a *coup d' etat*. But it never came. Perhaps the reasons were the daily mounting Indian threat and the ingrained loyalty and discipline of the officers corps. Instead, the army looked upto the political leaders to create better conditions.

The question who ruled Pakistan during that grim period still besets us. On the surface it was the Armed Forces. Within the country and outside, every one maintained that it was a military rule. The military had taken over the country on the orders of a constitutionally elected President. In fact the military as such had not taken over and this was its misfortune. Only the Commander-in-Chief had moved into the President's House and was gradually cut off from the Armed Forces. Like his predecessor, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, who, within the first week of his becoming CMLA and President, had completely cut himself off from the Armed Forces and ruled through the institutions of civil government, General Yahya Khan also kept the Armed Forces out of all government institutions. But unlike the previous President, he surrounded himself with a few senior army officers having no responsibility to, or for, the army, and cut himself off from the Armed Forces and gradually also from most civil institutions. It is a misnomer therefore, to call it a military rule. The Government's economic, social and law and order policies, or even the rules and regulations

affecting the everyday life of the people, were never drafted by the military institutions, nor was their advice taken or their analysis of problems asked for.

Generally the Armed Forces' officers contemptuously referred to the few army officers around the President as the 'coterie.' It should not be mixed up with HQ CMLA. By July, 1970, senior officers at HQ CMLA were complaining that decisions were being taken on personalities and national issues by the President on the advice of the coterie without their knowledge. Coterie, according to them had become super headquarters and a sort of 'Mafia' and had made the President inaccessible. There were fortunately a number of officers who had the courage to speak out. They advised the President, when he had not become so remote, that his frequent statements about "on temporary duty as President" were not fair either to the country or to the Army whose C-in-C he continued to be. The country had to go on and could not progress in the atmosphere of indecision and inaction implied in the temporary position of the President. He was advised to sack those people around him who used his name to make money or grab land. He was told to refrain from women who were selling his name. The Army was getting a bad name and its reputation was being tarnished because of their activities. The people he had collected around himself carried a bad name in the army. In fact the activities of the coterie and his other companions were well known to him but he never took any action against them. He had complete disregard for what others thought of him and those around him as long as he had faith in them.

Once General Yahya Khan had moved into the President's House all state matters began to be decided there. The coterie became all-knowing and stopped following the normal straight channels of command and procedure. It was slowly becoming clear that they wanted to perpetuate themselves and towards that end they were working. Yahya Khan never asked for advice from the GHQ, and if he discussed matters with the Chief of Staff, Army the latter never got them analysed at the GHQ. The Defence Ministry was not designed to giving advice as it still functioned on the old colonial system bequeathed by the British. Like the Armed Forces Headquarters, whose professional advice was never sought, the permanent civil servants and their departments were seldom consulted. The few army officers of the coterie were, in the eyes of

the Army, no more professionals. At least they did not have any decision-processing machinery at their disposal. They were there not because they were senior or more efficient or better equipped for the jobs they were holding. They were there only because General Yahya Khan had faith in them and they were the types he liked. The Army also maintained that the officers in the coterie were not sincere, they all had their angles and served particular interests. The real rulers were this coterie and all decisions were taken by them. A number of important decisions were taken after sunset, particularly during 1971, when the President could not function during the day after long nights, which gradually became a daily routine. Commenting on this decision-making process, a Lieut Colonel working in the HQ CMLA had remarked: "It is disgusting to note that important decisions effecting the destiny of the nation are being taken in that careless and perfunctory manner."

The real people who ruled the country during March 1969 and December 1971, were only a few. At the head of this coterie was General Yahya Khan whose political understanding was infantile, although he nursed political ambitions. The political situation in the country and his own position as C-in-C of the Army offered him a chance to rise to the highest position in the state. His entire training and background was that of a soldier. He was authoritarian by nature and hated politicians and their personal feuds and bickerings. He was reserved by temperament and had an exclusive circle of friends and advisers. His ideas of high life attracted only a particular type of people. He was not cut out to understand the power of the people's will, and was therefore totally unaware of the sentiments, emotions and ambitions of the people. And as time passed he removed himself further from them. He became more and more confined to the President's House and engrossed in his gay life. The realities of political life and the requirements of the rapidly changing situation started escaping him. He was never a hard worker. If, as C-in-C he used to work for six hours a day, on assuming the office of the head of State, his capacity of work gradually diminished further. More and more was left to the subordinates who found it increasingly difficult to extract a decision out of him. If ever the leaders of the people tried to advise him, he would listen to them patiently but would not act on their advice, or would do as he deemed fit. The affairs of the State were conducted not through normal institutions but by an individual according to his own inclinations and moods. Some

of the institutions had already been destroyed before him, and the remaining ones disappeared under him. No effort was made to resuscitate them.

Next to the President in power and influence seemed to be Lieutenant General S.G.M. Peerzada, his Principal Staff Officer. He served General Yahya Khan as PSO on the civil as well as the military side. Peerzada, an efficient and ambitious officer, with well-marked prejudices, had a fairly good career in the Army. He was always considered an up-and-coming officer till he got a mild heart stroke while he was serving as Military Secretary to the then President, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, with the rank of a Brigadier. He was medically down-categorised on recovery. He could no longer bear the pressure of work of Military Secretary to the President and the forces building up against him. He, therefore, asked to be relieved of the post. The future must have become bleak for him as medically down-categorised officers of that age and rank were debarred from promotion. He had worked under General Yahya Khan as Director of Military Operations and later as Vice-Chief of the General Staff, and Yahya apparently liked him and developed confidence in him. On becoming C-in-C Yahya Khan promoted him to the rank of Major General and brought him back as Adjutant General, some cynics say as the right person to deal with the Field Marshal. When Yahya bacame President, General Peerzada, who had handled the imposition of Martial Law, was appointed PSO under the set-up at the HQ CMLA, and became the strongest man at the Centre. The President had implicit faith in him, some people who were near the Government of those days also believe that his influence and power waned at the time of military action in East Pakistan. However, gradually, when the President's capacity for work was impaired, most of the work was left to Peerzada, who at this stage became supreme except in name. The time came when the President attended the office only from 1100 to 1300 hours, and as a normal practice called for certain files after sunset. There was some aura attached to General Peerzada which made him mysterious and therefore a most dreaded and hated man. To give him his due, it is remarkable that, in spite of the fact that the Armed Services did not like him and the civil service officers hated him, he continued in power till the end of Yahya Khan's regime.

Other officers at the HQ CMLA, Brigadiers and Lieut Colonels,

were mere functionaries trying hard to do their best. If any one of them took a wrong step and tried to impose himself on others, it could be attributed to his misplaced enthusiasm.

Next came General Abdul Hamid Khan, Chief of Staff, Army. He and Peerzada were always competing with each other to be closer to the President. Hamid as brought out earlier was officially number two after Yahya Khan. Some officers who were near the President and General Hamid believe that by July 1970 Hamid for all practical purposes had become number two and Peerzada had been by-passed. As far as personal relations are concerned he was the closest to Yahya Khan and was officially number two after the President. Both had picked up friendship during their college days and had kept it up since then. If there was any close confident of Yahya Khan, and one who understood and read his mind correctly, it was Hamid. He was also a second class copy of Yahya Khan in after-sunset activities and faithfully participated in them as far as he was allowed. He used his influence and partronized his business friends and protected their interests. It was also alleged that later he himself got involved in property and business. His great value for Yahya Khan, besides his dependability as a friend, was his advice. As noted earlier, Hamid had a fairly clear mind, but his personality was marred by an obvious lack of the power of decision. A little strength of character in him would have surely changed the history of the country.

Major General Ghulam Umar was also a part of the coterie as Chief of National Security. He was an opinionated man and took pride in his supposedly superior knowledge of Pakistani affairs and how they should be handled. He, amongst the coterie, emerged as the political trouble shooter for the President. Umar perhaps influenced the President and his close advisers by his better education and persuasive talk. Then there were others like both intelligence chiefs and a couple of Ministers who at times greatly influenced the President by advice which soon turned out to be wrong. The higher civil service was demoralised—only a few favourites among them could voice a contrary opinion and that in most abject terms. The remaining lot, with civil and military officers, were a team of sycophants who got handsome rewards for their 'services', materially as well as by way of promotions. They merely served as court jesters, mainly for their own benefit; and along with the gay ladies of the President's personal inner circle,

they were allowed to interfere more and more in day-to-day administration and to misguide the President for their own personal or factional ends.

Amongst themselves they ran the country or helped in doing so. Soon the country's problems became too big for them and they gradually proved themselves to be shallow people trying to deal with problems far too big for them. As for Yahya Khan, a foreign correspondent summed up his condition thus: 'The President himself shows disquieting signs of losing grip. As the nation hovers near the edge of war, as the political problems mount still higher, as the economy crumbles, vital decisions are ducked or taken irrationally, impatiently, viscerally.'*

Under the circumstances, it was surprising to most how the administration continued to function at all and how the country kept going. The answer is simple. It had learnt to run itself and continued to do so somehow even without clear policies and higher directions. This task was made easy by the strength of the society, which was old and governed by traditions. Its social structure, economy and culture were highly traditional and needed a great effort to break it. However, in a few years, it had become a diseased society to the discerning eye. The malady had sunk deep into it, and it would take a long time and continuous hard and united effort to put it on an even keel.

* The *Daily Telegraph*, London, November 1, 1971.

CHAPTER III

LEADING TO CRISIS

IN his first speech on March 26, 1969, when he assumed power, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan assured his countrymen that he had no ambition other than creating conditions conducive to the framing of a constitution by the representatives of the people and the establishment of a constitutional government enjoying their support. Time and again he reminded his listeners of his being a soldier and of his desire to return to his profession as soon as the affairs of the country were settled. As a result of this he and his government, at least on the surface, turned neutral and projected themselves as defenders of the *status quo* in national affairs. The more he and his administration interfered and strove to mould national affairs according to his thinking, the more vocal he became about his neutrality, and desire to return to the barracks.

Yahya Khan had inherited a country which was disunited. The popular, prolonged and widespread political agitation against President Ayub Khan and his Government had devalued the

administration and lowered its morale. The discipline of civic life had been eroded by prolonged political agitation. Regionalism and *quasi* nationalism raised their heads. The polarization particularly between East and West Pakistan which had been allowed to take root became pronounced. The gulf between the two parts threatened to grow wider and deeper.

The new Martial Law authorities did not find any great difficulty in controlling the situation and restoring law and order. Conditions in West Pakistan improved but in East Pakistan they never fully came under the control of the administration. On the surface, of course, things quietened down in Dacca, where students had run the administration for about a week, before the declaration of Martial Law. In those few days the students had proved that they were well advised and showed some knowledge and knack for administration. They had established a sort of control room and means of checks and restrictions and the administration had functioned comparatively smoothly. The imposition of Martial Law on March 25, 1969 came as a political as well as a psychological shock to East Pakistanis. The Round Table Conference, earlier in the month, had raised their expectations to some share in the power but Martial Law closed the doors. After the first shock of the new Martial Law had subsided, the people started taking account of the prevailing conditions in the country. The biggest grouse of East Pakistanis was that they did not enjoy their due share in political power and were, therefore, denied its fruits. During President Ayub Khan's time it had gradually dawned upon them that as long as military power remained in the hands of West Pakistanis, they would never be able to get any political power. With the advent of another Martial Law wielded by officers who came entirely from West Pakistan, they started moving towards more and more autonomy from the Centre. When some freedom of expression was allowed, these feelings errupted.

Towards the end of July 1969, that is four months after re-imposition of Martial Law, the new regime claimed that their primary objective of re-establishing law and order had been achieved. From that day onwards, the process of restoring democracy started. President Yahya Khan, after extensive discussions with the leading politicians of both wings, had appreciated that there were three open questions which should not be allowed to become election issues. Firstly, the question of representation on the basis of population

or the existing mode of parity between the two wings, secondly, the future of one Unit in the West Wing and thirdly, the problem of autonomy for East Pakistan. Yahya Khan, in his broadcast on July 28, 1969 maintained that 'if these are not resolved in a satisfactory manner and within a reasonable period of time, I may have to go to the nation to obtain its verdict on the basis of a constitution before elections are held.' In his address to the nation on November 28, 1969, he declared the first two issues resolved. One Unit was to be dissolved and the democratic principle of one man one vote was accepted and would form the basis of elections for the National Assembly. The most important issue for East Pakistan, that of autonomy, was left open. He, however, repeated what he had already conceded, that 'the people of East Pakistan did not have their full share in the decision making process on vital natio al issues.' This could according to him, be done by giving max mum autonomy to the two wings of Pakistan without impairing national integrity and the solidarity of the country. In the same address he spelled out the time table for the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. Martial Law Regulation (MLR) Number 60 was also promulgated by the President on December 21, 1969 allowing unobstructed political activity in the country from January 1, 1970. It included rules for the conduct of political activity in a peaceful manner. It laid down in broad terms the conduct of political activities which were permissible and which were not. This MLR was the guide-lines not only for the politicians but also for the Martial Law authorities to ensure that political activities were kept within prescribed bounds.

In conformity with this programme, full political activity was allowed in the country with effect from January 1, 1970. Thus started perhaps the longest election campaign of the history of democracy anywhere in the world. Three months later, the Legal Framework Order, 1970, was published on March 30, 1970; this was 'to form the main base for the operation of the National Assembly in their task of constitution making.' Besides containing instructions about how the Assembly would come into being, its strength, rules of procedures and other related matters, it clearly defined some basic principles of constitution making, which were in line with the principles already enshrined in the old and abrogated constitutions of Pakistan. First, it must preserve the Islamic ideology of Pakistan, secondly, it must ensure the independence, territorial integrity and national solidarity of Pakistan, thirdly, the constitution must be

democratic and should include periodic elections on the basis of population and adult franchise, independence of judiciary, and fundamental rights of citizens. Fourthly, it must be a true federal constitution 'in which all powers including legislative, administrative and financial shall be so distributed between the Federal Government and the Provinces that the Provinces shall have maximum autonomy, that is to say maximum legislative, administrative and financial powers but the Federal Government shall also have adequate powers including legislative, administrative and financial powers to discharge its responsibilities in relation to external and internal affairs and to preserve the independence and territorial integrity of the country.' Fifthly, the constitution 'must provide full opportunity to the people of all regions of Pakistan for participation in national affairs so that they can live together as equal and honourable partners and be moulded into a strong nation as visualized by the Father of the Nation, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.'

In the meantime, various political parties issued their election manifestos. That of the Awami League, having almost all its strength in East Pakistan and led by Mr. Mujibur Rahman, came into conflict with these principles, particularly with the concept of autonomy. It visualized a 'Federation granting full autonomy on the basis of the Six Point formula to each of the Federating units.'

The glaring difference between the Legal Framework Order, the basis of election in the country, and a party's manifesto could not have escaped the notice of the President and his advisers. The Awami League's rejection of it was more open and consistent. The Sheikh and his lieutenants hardly missed an occasion to emphasize their party's Six Point programme. They ignored the Legal Framework Order even publicly. In a meeting at Naogaon, on October 25, 1970, Mr. Mujibur Rahman said 'he and his party condemned Legal Framework Order but at the same time decided to participate in the elections as they regarded the elections as a referendum on regional autonomy on the basis of the Six Point programme.' However, at no time during the election campaign was Mujib or his party warned publicly against falling foul of the Legal Framework Order or directly asked to desist from the wrong course. Therefore, the Awami League's election campaign was

all along at variance with the basis laid down in the Legal Framework Order.

The Awami League's uncompromising championship of regional autonomy on the basis of the Six Point programme had caught the imagination of the people and Mr. Mujibur Rahman's popularity was growing very rapidly. Some leaders of other parties warned the President of the consequences and entreated him to clear the position but to no avail. Even Maulana Bhashani had given a similar warning later in November, 1970 while talking to a Brigadier. He had said 'This patient (East Pakistan) is very sick and needs long and patient cure. Mr. Mujib is bent upon selling it, control him. He would shout 'Jai Bangladesh' and people would gladly vote for him.' In fact the President did not consider anything wrong with the Six Points. HQ CMLA had confirmed when approached, by the Provincial Administration that preaching of Six Point programme was not against Martial Law Regulation Number 60. It appears that similarly the other transgressions of the Legal Framework Order or MLR 60 were not considered as such by HQ CMLA otherwise Martial Law authorities in the Province would have taken cognisance of them. The procedure followed at that time was that the speeches of all political leaders, after having been vetted at HQ MLAs at Provinces, were referred each night to HQ CMLA and action taken if a breach had occurred. As far as is known, no political considerations at any time came in the way of Martial Law authorities of the Provinces.

The Central Government remained reluctant to take action against Awami League, who continued to pressurize the other parties, the administration, the semi-government agencies and the information media with impunity. One tangible explanation of his costly inaction was that the President and most of his advisers had been led to believe that all this activity and defiance of the Legal Framework Order was only a political stunt and that the matter would be sorted out later and everything would turn out favourably after the elections. In any case they thought the Awami League was not going to win a majority of the seats in the future National Assembly. On the other hand Mr. Mujibur Rahman showed creditable political acumen in keeping everyone satisfied during that long year of electioneering. He said something openly and the same thing in a different way behind the scenes. In fact he discussed these things in different ways with various authorities.

As far as it is known, Mujib, neither in public nor in private, moved from his Six Points. The interpretation of these points varied depending upon the leaders—the proponents thought the programme provided a viable formula, opponents thought it spelled the doom. However, the inaction of the Central Government gradually helped to demoralise and destroy all the liberal and rightist elements in East Pakistan. Regionalism and alien idiologies became supreme.

As mentioned earlier, through the imposition of Martial Law, law and order had been restored in East Pakistan but hatred continued against the non-Bengalis, particularly West Pakistanis. The hatred against West Pakistani element of the Army and their families began to find expression in personal rudeness towards them. The gulf between East and West Pakistani officers started widening suddenly. There were cases of stabbing of Army jawans caught in secluded places. Political activity in East Pakistan had never stopped, though it had subsided during the first two months of the imposition of Martial Law. A lot continued to happen under the surface: whispering campaigns, organizational activity, individual and group discussions, propaganda through pamphlets and cultural activities continued to grow in intensity and extent. Most of it was based on preaching hatred against West Pakistanis and the most visible symbol of power, the Army. All this infected the civil service, the police, the para-military forces and even the East Pakistani element of the armed forces. By January 1, 1970, when political activity was freely allowed by law, a new phenomenon had appeared. The rural population which had remained calm and aloof also got contaminated by the politics of nationalism and regionalism and hatred against West Pakistan. At this time the Naxalites—Maoist and Leninists suffered a setback in leadership as Maulana Bhashani, the leader on whom they had leaned and looked up to for guidance, disowned them. Denied of leadership they went underground to indoctrinate the oppressed. They circulated secretly, preaching to students, peasants and labourers that the country was ripe for a revolution.

By June, 1970, the rising tide of the Awami League had nearly overawed all other political elements. The National Awami Party of Maulana Bhashani—a popular leader of peasants and workers and a strong opponent of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman– had been disorganised and demoralised as a result of the arrest of its 1400 leaders and workers by the Provincial administration. It was

reported that Maulana Bhashani when he called on him, requested the President to release his 1400 workers from jail. In return the Maulana promised that he would 'take care of' Mujibur Rahman. The President did not react. A few rightist political parties, the three Muslim Leagues and Jamaat-e-Islami were also confident of giving a good fight to the Awami League. They were, however, being handicapped by the Central Government which was openly allowing the Awami League to trample upon the Legal Framework Order and was keeping its eyes shut to the open assistance given to the Awami League and the outright opposition preached against other parties by a large number of officers of the Provincial administration.

On January 18, 1970, the Jamaat-e-Islami organised a public meeting in Paltan Maidan, Dacca. This meeting was to be addressed by its Chief and showed signs of becoming a success. Some anti-Awami League political leaders thought the Jamaat was tactically in error for organizing at Paltan Maidan a meeting so early in the campaign as the Provincial Administration was not fully prepared with its security measures. The meeting was deliberately messed up by Awami League workers, civil service officers, the police and even East Pakistani officers of the Army working at the Martial Law Headquarters at Dacca. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's son led one group of attackers. The police just stood and watched. The Army too inadvertently became instrumental in making this meeting a failure as on the advice of civil administration, it was not alerted to take action against the people who were out to disrupt the meeting. Thus one of the political forces, although weak, that could confidently stand up to the Awami League and its programme had a very serious setback in the eyes of the public, and could never recover from the shock. From then on, the Awami League had a smooth sailing and went from strength to strength. Its election campaign became a movement and was thenceforth run as a movement.

Meanwhile, the economic and social forces particularly those unleashed by the 1965 war with India, which had been mainly responsible for toppling President Ayub Khan, continued to dominate politics in West Pakistan too. These forces were throwing up new ideas and new leaders. Along with the revivalism of rightists politics, which had been given an impetus by the importance given to the rightist leaders during the Round Table Conference called by President Ayub Khan early in 1969, new forces were

appearing on the political scene. They were led by the newly emerging Pakistan People's Party, which was taking root amongst the mass of people and attracting most of the progressive forces to its fold. The party's slogan—Islam our Faith, Democracy our Policy, Socialism our economy—and its plank of *roti, kapra aur makan* (food, cloth and shelter)were getting popular and even the middle class was swept away by its programme and approach. Young men spearheaded by vocal section of the students acted as its vanguard. The Party's Chairman, Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the youngest and the most energetic and buoyant politician in the country, who had acquired international stature as Foreign Minister of Pakistan, had now become an idol of peasants, workers, students and intellectuals. West Pakistan had found a new political leader and a large section of the people considered him as their saviour. However, only a few old leaders had joined him and the other emerging leaders in his party were mostly unknown entities.

As the election campaign opened, on January 1, the polarization between Left and Right became visible, and it became more and more pronounced as the campaign progressed. Where the Left generally tended towards unity, the Right, though still in vast majority, was becoming disunited even in the traditional society of West Pakistan. This was mainly because of the internal bickerings and clash of personalities among different leaders rather than on the basis of party programme. The Right had not thrown up a leader of stature who could unite them and whom people could look up to A number of its leaders, like some belonging to other parties, became willing tools in the hands of General Yahya Khan.

The polarization was not only between Right and Left in the two wings of Pakistan. It was becoming more acute between the two wings. Except for the traditional political parties, the newly emerging political forces had no following in the other wing. Their programmes, although on all Pakistan basis, had no attraction for each other. They differed entirely in their basic thinking. While the Awami League emphasized regional autonomy in its Six Point programme, the People's Party advocated provincial autonomy without weakening the Centre. While the Awami League considered that Pakistan could be kept strong and integrated through maximum regional autonomy even if this resulted in an inviable Centre, the People's Party accepted the regional aspirations only so far as they could be satisfied under a comparatively strong

Centre. The political courses adopted by the two wings were thus heading towards different goals.

The Army was being dragged more and more into the administration of the country and consequently into politics. Unlike the Martial Law imposed in 1958, where Field Marshal Ayub Khan utilized the armed forces and its officers to the minimum, General Yahya Khan used them extensively. Perhaps this could not be avoided under the circumstances where they had to fulfil his promise of restoring democracy. The Personal Staff Officer to the Chief Martial Law Administrator and the President was a Lieutenant General. He had a team of officers working at HQ CMLA. Each governor of a province besides being himself a service officer had military advisers and functionaries. The chief of National Security was a Major General again having military officers as staff. Approximately 125 officers were directly employed on various duties. In addition, over 300 were indirectly kept busy with Martial Law duties. The impact of their involvement was much more than these numbers indicate. Gradually the senior officers amongst them, like a number of senior civil service officers and civilian advisers to the President, acquired vested interests in the military regime. As a natural consequence, and with the willing consent of the President, they started influencing poelpe and events behind the scenes by ready cash and promises of share in political power. They strove to bring about changes advantageous to the regime instead of leaving politics to find its own equilibrium. As one young officer on the staff of the CMLA pointed out, 'the way it was done was most disgusting.' Those political leaders, who had declined to become tools in the hands of the regime, started doubting the sincerity of the President's intentions and the earnestness of his declared aims.

By about August, 1970, the appreciation of the Government about the outcome of the forthcoming elections was that out of the 169 seats in National Assembly for East Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League would win 46 seats or at the most 60 to 70 seats, the three Muslim Leagues 60 seats and the remainder being divided amongst the other parties including Maulana Bhashani's National Awami Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami. In West Pakistan, the result of elections as envisaged by the President and his close advisers was that out of the 144 National Assembly seats, the Pakistan People's Party would win 20 to 30 seats, the three Muslim Leagues 20 to 30 each, the remainder going to National Awami

Party (Wali Group) and the Jamaat-e-Islami. Professor G.W. Choudhary, then constitutional adviser to the President and Minister of Communications while addressing the Pakistan Society in London on September 10, 1970, stated that there was no likelihood of any one single party emerging in a majority either from West Pakistan or East Pakistan. He also remarked that there was no question of the East Pakistan members forming one single group in confrontation...If that happened then it would mean the end of the state.

It is evident that the President and his advisers did not understand the people and their prevailing mood. Their assessment of the results of forthcoming elections was, therefore, based on wishful thinking and self-generated hopes. Against the background of this rosy picture it was hardly surprising that they decided not to interfere with the elections so that no one could say that they were not free and fair? However, the Presidential assessment of the result of the forthcoming elections involved one threat, and that was a coalition of the Awami League and otner parties which might together succeed in forming a government at the Centre. The natural alliance looked to be one between Mujibur Rahman's Awami League and Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Daultana's Council Muslim League supported by Khan Wali Khan's National Awami Party. If this happened it would be nothing less than a disaster in the eyes of the regime. Plans were therefore made to knock out Daultana and bring forward Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan of the Qayyum Muslim League, who could also act as a counter to Khan Wali Khan. It was hoped that he, along with Bhashani's 30 seats, plus East Pakistani dissidents and the Jamaat-e-Islami, would be able to form a stable government in the Centre. The Jamaat was considered neutral in party feuds, it was however expected to join the intended coalition in the interest of national integration. Work earnestly started to make this plan a success.

As time passed, growing incidents involving the law and order situation were reported particularly in East Pakistan. Political rivalries started taking a violent turn. Ransacking of rival offices, brick-batting of each other's processions, and attempts to disturb each other's public meetings, were resorted to. There were cases of stabbing of rivals and even attacks on rival villages. Anti-election and subversive elements, on the other hand, were organizing themselves in the interior in order to resort to violence. Explosion of crackers, throwing of hand bombs and stopping of trains by pulling

chains became common till a joint civil and military action brought these activities under control. Their clear aim was to create an atmosphere of uncertainty. Action by police or the East Pakistan Rifles was always resented and became an excuse for further crimes. In the face of this rising tide of law breaking, the agencies of law and order showed lack of will and determination to enforce it. By posing a threat to them and their families and playing on their emotion and regional sentiments, a number of them were subverted. 14 Infantry Division, the only Army formation in East Pakistan, was insufficient to provide a satisfactory internal security cover under the prevailing conditions. Nor had the Division a free hand to answer all the calls for internal security support. The order of the day was not to take any action that might give the impression of interference in the election campaign.

Economic conditions in the country were still getting worse. At the beginning of 1969, ad hoc increases in pay and wages had been made all over the country. The new Martial Law Administration had made further increases, but all that had not in any way ameliorated the conditions of the people. With the worsening law and order situation, economic activity was proportionately declining. The industrial investment, for instance, was understandably held in abeyance by the private enterprisers until the elections were over. Similarly the foreign investors also tended to hold their hand. The popular election slogans in the country promised one form of socialism or another. In these circumstances capital was bound to become shy and a vicious circle was created. The law and order situation reduced the economic activity in the country and the decline in economic activity generated more civic troubles, industrial disputes and crimes. This further depressed the economic activity, reduced the industrial development and consequently further restricted employment opportunities. The economic conditions particularly in East Pakistan, which was the scene of intense political activity, deteriorated further. The serious floods in East Pakistan in August 1970 subdued the political activities there temporarily and brought down the number of law and order cases, but the havoc caused by it drove the common man to near destitution. Capital, whether foreign, West Pakistani or East Pakistani, started flying out of East Pakistan.

Maulana Bhashani, the National Awami Party leader who had been disillusioned earlier by his Naxalite Maoist and Leninist

followers, reappeared on the scene. In order to outbid Mujib he shed his integrationist garb and came out openly for the complete independence of East Pakistan. His policies became more extremist than those of extremists in the Awami League. In fact, he now emerged the only rival of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The hate-West-Pakistan campaign was now gaining ground and getting more aggressive. Along with this the Armed Forces, which had come under criticism early in 1969, after the withdrawal of the Agartala Conspiracy case, became more and more the target of hate. There was no trouble and no difficulty whether political, economic or social which was not blamed on the Army and West Pakistanis. East Pakistan's appreciation of the help rendered by the armed forces in flood affected areas in August 1970, proved to be the last of its kind. Thereafter the superhuman efforts of the armed forces in various fields remained unappreciated. It was clear that a systematic and well organised campaign to undermine the confidence of the people in their armed forces, and subversion of their East Pakistani element, had been seriously launched. This ugly turn of sentiment concerning the armed forces came as a shock and surprise to the rank and file. They had never during the short history of Pakistan aligned themselves with any political party or owed loyalty to any individual. They had acted on the order of the legally constituted central authority. They had been used for various civil duties for which they had never been trained. In floods, in cyclones, in anti-smuggling and various relief operations, and for restoring order after political disturbances caused by warring politicians, they had always come out successful, receiving applause from the public. In fact they had been popular amongst the masses and had kept up this popularity by their devotion to the cause of Pakistan. Now, as a disciplined and patriotic force, they took these daily mounting attacks in their stride.

This was the scenario, in which the elections were to be held. The agony which the country, and especially East Pakistan was living through, was prolonged by postponing the elections from its original date of October 5 to December 7, 1970 ostensibly due to the havoc caused by the floods. The real cause however seemed to be that the President had been advised by his intelligence and some ministers that Mujibur Rahman's popularity was declining and a postponement would cost Awami League quite a few seats.

Then came the big tragedy. On the night of November 12/13, 1970, the southern part of East Pakistan including the off shore islands, was hit by an unprecedented cyclone and tidal bore. The calamity had no parallel in recent history. The people in the interior, and the civil administration of East Pakistan had no clue of the extent of the disaster, nor was any serious effort made for a couple of days to discover it. For a few days the whole affair remained grossly mismanaged at the highest level. The politicians, past masters in making political capital out of human misery, could not be expected to miss such an opportunity. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League reaped most of the harvest. Even when relief work was at its peak, when soldiers, sailors and airmen were, in their quiet way, busy night and day bringing succour to the bereaved families, building shelters and burying the dead, and when voluntary committees to collect relief goods for the cyclone affected population were functioning all over West Pakistan, when more goods were sent by Lahore alone than all the help given by East Pakistanis together or any one single foreign agency, armed forces and West Pakistanis were being criticised and made targets of hate and held responsible for all the miseries of East Pakistan. The complete absence of West Pakistan political leaders and the high ranking civilian officers of the Centre at the scene of the tragedy did not in any way help matters. Their absence was taken as an added proof of East Pakistan's isolation from West Pakistan, and the Centre and West Pakistan's indifference towards it. Some of the 100 odd foreign correspondents at that time in Dacca added fuel to the fire and focussed their entire attention on East-West Pakistan relations, highlighting the disadvantage of dependence on the Centre and West Pakistan. Later Mr. Maurice J. Williams, Chairman, United States Government Committee for East Pakistan Relief in a letter published in the Washington Post on January 5, 1971, tried to allay these adverse impressions. He wrote: 'During my visit to East Pakistan in late November, I found no evidence to support press allegations of ineffectiveness on the part of Pakistan Government. Confusion and delay there had been, but once the seriousness of the event was realized the Pakistan response was better than experience with disasters in other parts of the world would have led us to expect. Western reporters are probably misled by the heat of the hard fought Pakistan elections. It is sad when politicians here or elsewhere attempt to gain partisan advantage from a terrible natural disaster.'

It was quite clear after the cyclone that the Awami League would sweep the polls. Many politicians, including Maulana Bhashani and Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan of the Pakistan National League,used the excuse of being busy with relief work in the cyclone affected areas to withdraw their candidates from the election and others just withdrew comprehending the change in the political atmosphere, and still others, under threats or temptation. The Awami League seemed to be using large amounts of money along with the strong arm without any check or hindrance. In the election campaign of 1970, the Awami League was given the freest opportunity to spread the gospel of Six Points to every town, village and hamlet of East Pakistan and it made full use of it. The Awami League appealed to Bengali Nationalism on the one hand and hatred of West Pakistan on the other. The name of Bangladesh chosen by the Awami League for East Pakistan symbolised the former, and its cry of exploitation by vested interests expressed the latter.

At this stage, during the confusion caused by unbridled political activity and the worsening law and order situation, some para-military organisations started appearing on the scene. The Awami League set up one under the name of Sevak Bahini with Colonel M.A.G. Osmany, a retired officer of the Pakistan Army, as its chief organizer. Recruits were mainly found from East Pakistan Students League, the students arm of Awami League, Goonda elements, Ansars and Mujahids (the auxiliary forces trained by the police and the army respectively). It looked as if preparations were already in hand to support by force a mass movement which Awami League leaders had lately been threatening to launch in case their party failed to come into power. The communists including fellow travellers were also organizing para-military forces, particularly among the peasants, workers and the students; their secret circulars emphasized that the conditions were congenial for an armed revolution. However, their aim at this stage was to thwart the elections by any means. It was also reported that a large number of arms and instructors was secretly arriving from outside Pakistan. Interested parties had now seriously started fishing in the troubled waters of East Pakistan.

The elections were at last held on December 7, 1970. Their most surprising aspect for the administration was the generally peaceful atmosphere which prevailed during the polling. The

result was a sweeping victory for the Awami League in East Pakistan and People's Party in the West. Both parties, however, failed to secure any seat in the other wing. These results upset all the calculations of the President and his advisers. They remained completely inactive for about a week. The political centre of gravity had now decisively shifted to Dacca in East Pakistan

The outcome of the polling had brought a great change in East Pakistan: an atmosphere of tranquillity and confidence suddenly prevailed all over. Abdul Salam, Editor of The Pakistan Observer, Dacca and no Awami Leaguer himself, voiced the general feelings in his commentary from Pakistan Radio, Dacca after announcement of election results. He said: 'We made it, we did it. The era of people's rule has begun. We are entering from darkness into light. Let there be light.' It appeared as if the Bengalis had reached their long cherished goal. The hatred against West Pakistanis so persistently preached, almost disappeared. The President and the Army got their share of praise for having held the elections. West Pakistanis, even West Pakistani students in East Pakistan reported that they had not had it so good at any time before. The law and order situation also became almost normal for the first time after about four years. Unfortunately, however, the hopeful atmosphere did not last very long and no advantage was taken of it by the President. When time was the essence, the President took five weeks to meet the majority party leader in Dacca. Both appeared satisfied and the President also 'expressed his firm optimism over the nation going through equally successfully in the second phase—constitution making—leading to the transfer of power to the people.

While in Dacca in the second week of January 1971, President Yahya Khan had promised the Sheikh that the National Assembly session would be convened after the Eid-ul-Azha which fell on February 6, 1971. But, the official announcement summoning it to meet at Dacca on March 3, 1971 was issued on February 13.

This delay and the way President was moving naturally raised doubts. The old suspicions reappeared. Some people even called Yahya Khan a usurper and questioned his intentions. It was argued that the rational course for General Yahya Khan as the Commander-in-Chief under Field Marshal Ayub Khan was to advise him that the civil administration having failed, the prevailing

conditions in the country demanded that the Martial Law should be imposed. The President should have continued and also the constitution, but Yahya Khan removed the one and abrogated the other. Therefore, he was a usurper. Anyway the delay in convening the National Assembly caused deep and widespread frustration in East Pakistan, which was particularly dangerous as it followed a short-lived period of comparative confidence. The people there began to think of other methods of realizing the political power which they thought was their right but was being denied to them.

The longer the delay in calling the Assembly, the greater were the chances of a drift between the two wings. The extremists in East Pakistan, particularly within the Awami League, started gaining strength. The voice of seccessionism and independence became more vociferous and popular. The extremists and the moderates began to vie with each other in demanding more and more for East Pakistan. The rightists and liberals had already been eliminated.

In this serious situation a dramatic incident took place. Two young Kashmiris hijacked an Indian Air Line's Fokker Friendship plane from Srinagar on January 30, 1971 to Lahore and blew it up. The administration was successful in rescuing the crew and passengers and handed them over to the Indian authorities. India, however, stopped all Pakistani flights over its territory. This step more than doubled the air distance and the flying time between the two wings of Pakistan, at a time when free movement was badly needed and created a sense of isolation in East Pakistan. Later a commission appointed to investigate the incident revealed that this hijacking was an Indian plot.

The election results had placed the President on the horns of a dilemma. The scheme of things that he had worked out in his mind, with the aid and advice of his advisers, had been shattered. He had to make a fresh plan. His new aim was ostensibly to strive for a Mujib-Bhutto coalition with Yahya Khan as President. If pursued honestly, this was a logical aim considering that the party which achieved absolute majority in the National Assembly was voted into power by one wing only, on a programme which no West Pakistani had approved. But, later events proved that Yahya Khan actually strived to play Bhutto and Mujib against

each other. However, from now on, the destiny of Pakistan lay in one man's hand and that was Mr. Mujibur Rahman. He had become a prisoner of his great victory. Could he be flexible in his attitude and his party's programme and accommodate the majority party of West Pakistan? Could he agree to a compromise without committing ' political suicide? Could he now counteract the public opinion he had so diligently created over a long time?

Yahya Khan's politically untrained mind and his political ambitions along with the ambitions and ignorance of his advisers he had himself chosen, had brought Pakistan to that pass. Yahya Khan had never warned Mujib that he could go so far and no further. He, on the other hand was quoted as having remarked that he found nothing wrong with the Six Points. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who, together with other leaders of his Party had so vehemently emphasized the Six Point programme all along, and called the election a referendum for autonomy, could not suddenly change his stand. He continued adhering to the stand he had taken and the promises he had made before the elections. On January 3, 1971, at a mammoth public meeting in Paltan Maidan, he put all Awami League Members of National and Provincial Assemlies on oath to follow the party programme. President Yahya Khan had taken the country to a point where only two courses were open to him: either strive for a Pakistan with a strong Centre and end up with no Pakistan: or have Pakistan at any cost by allowing regional autonomy based on Six Points and demanded by the Awami League. As it turned out Yahya Khan chose an unachievable course and a policy of repression rather than one of generosity.

During this period, efforts made to subvert the East Pakistani element of the Armed Forces bore fruit. As pointed out earlier, the Awami League's election campaign had turned into a movement and was conducted as a movement. No East Pakistani, particularly an educated one, could escape its urge and drive. As it transpired later, about the end of December 1970, a plan in three parts was made and perfected gradually by retired Colonel M.A.G. Osmany, who was at that time head of the military committee of the Awami League. Part I of the plan consisted of acquiring power through political negotiations, and after that remove the disparity between the two wings and declare independence at an opportune moment. The aim of Part II was that in case Part I failed, political power must be seized by force. For this purpose East Pakistan was

divided into six sectors–Dacca, Mymensingh and Tangail districts; Chittagong and Hill Tract districts, Comilla, Noakhali and Sylhet districts; Khulna, Jessore and Barisal districts; Dinajpur, Bogra and Rangpur districts and lastly Rajshahi and Pabna districts. Commanders were appointed and forces and tasks were allotted. The commanders were senior serving East Pakistani officers of the armed forces present in the areas and the troops were the East Bengal Regiment, the East Pakistan Rifles, the Police, the Para-military forces, the Mujahids and Ansar and the students and Awami League volunteers in the area. The commanders were to work in liaison with local members of National and Provincial Assemblies, who besides being political advisers, would collect arms, through local licence holders, looting shops and smuggling from across the borders. Arms and ammunition were also to come from India in convoys which they would arrange to receive through specified border posts named by them. Arms and ammunition already dumped at the Dacca University Campus, some temples and other places would be available to the sectors concerned.

In case Part II also failed, Part III would come into force. All forces and as much of the public as possible would withdraw across the borders into India opposite their respective sectors. Maximum destruction, panic, terror and chaos would be created while retreating, and the public mind would be poisoned against the West Pakistan Army element. The object of the mass migration was to convert Bangladesh into an international issue. Then a long term plan of resistance would come into operation and recourse would be had to guerilla warfare. Lieutenant General Wasiuddin, an East Pakistani General Officer at the General Headquarters had earlier conveyed the following information through an officer courier from Rawalpindi:—

a. India would so arrange that over-flights of Pakistani planes from one Wing to another over Indian teritory would be stopped; consequently, reinforcement of West Pakistani troops by air would not be possible.

b. India had promised to deploy her forces on the West Pakistan borders in order to create a threat of war and thus ensure that large reinforcements would not be sent to East Pakistan.

The conspiracy seems to have been widespread and known to some senior police and civil officers. Gradually a number of East Pakistani officers of the Armed Forces were convinced of the cause and inducted into the plan.*

The inaction of the President turned an already grave political situation into a more serious affair. At last the President invited Mujibur Rahman and other top leaders of Awami League on February 9, to visit Rawalpindi, but they regretted their inability to do so. Things had reached a stage where Awami League circles maintained that even if Mujibur Rahman had tried to come over at that time, he would have been physically dragged out of the plane by his followers. He admitted to the Governor who duly conveyed it to the President that his party would not allow him to visit West Pakistan, not in a spirit of defiance of the President, but as an expression of their resentment against the vested interests in West Pakistan, who were at work to deprive East Pakistan of its legitimate rights. On February 17, the President repeated his invitation to Mujib to visit Rawalpindi and complained that the existing situation was due to his rigidity; he also indicated that if Mujib did not come to Rawalpindi, he (President) would have to take unilateral action. But even this had no effect.

The country was heading for a total revolt in East Pakistan. On the one hand there was the leader of the elected majority party in the National Assembly, who had won the election on a declared programme and who was now insisting that a constitution be framed in accordance with that programme. In a statement he said: "We want to frame a constitution and we shall frame it on the basis of the Six Point programme. Those who accept it, let them accept and those who would not accept it let them not accept it. ....no one else has that right (to frame constitution)." He predicted victory for the Six Point programme, even if they had to face bullets. On the other hand was the President who had never objected to that programme but was now sternly refusing to let that programme go through. The people were impatiently awaiting the result. In East Pakistan the law and order situation had turned most unsatisfactory and was worsening rapidly. Whatever was left of economic activity seemed to be grinding to a halt.

* The plan and its details are based on the information provided by three East Pakistani officers, Brigadier M.R. Majumdar, Lieut-Colonels A.M.B. Yasin and Masudul Hasan.

Industrial activity was almost at a standstill. The common man had become almost destitute.

No attention was paid or credence given to the advice and entreaties of the responsible people at the spot. The Governor of East Pakistan, Admiral S.M. Ahsan, who had successfully steered the Province during most difficult times and kept a close liaison with all political leaders, who in turn had confidence in him, was losing the confidence of the President. He was now regularly being criticised in the inner circle of the President as being in the hands of Mujib. His own view and that of the senior Army Officers in East Pakistan was that the process of restoration of democracy must continue. In their view the Armed Forces were in duty and honour bound to transfer power to the elected representatives of the people. They advised him that most of the misunderstandings and differences would disappear when articulated on the floor of the Assembly. But the President had his own difficulties, and there were some military and civil officers and other advisers who had been misguiding him to safeguard their own vested interests. Various intelligence agencies had a personal stake in ensuring that Mujib did not come into power. The President was reaching a position where he was to be offered a golden opportunity to go down in history as a hero. But he was to miss it. He was himself getting fed up with Mujibur Rahman, who it looks, now began to be treated as an adversary. The civil as well as the military officers who had gathered around Yahya Khan goaded him to take action. In their opinion the Awami League did not enjoy the support of the majority of the population of East Pakistan and the people did not have the stamina necessary for prolonged opposition. Therefore, the upsurge of Bengali nationalism and their demands would cool down in a few days after military action. He was assured that short and harsh action taken would bring the situation under control and the politicians would be cowed down. The killing of a few thousand would not be a high price for keeping the country together. Handing over of power to Mujibur Rahman, a proved traitor, would be a blunder and history would never forgive Yahya Khan for this. This advice, unfortunately, coincided with Yahya Khan's own ideas. He believed, 'show them the teeth and they will be all right.'

While Yahya Khan was thinking and stalling further action, the situation in East Pakistan was deteriorating fast. The

Governor Admiral S.M. Ahsan and Lieut-General Sahabzada M. Yaqub Khan, Commander Eastern Command, and Martial Law Administrator, were repeatedly emphasizing on the President that the situation demanded a political solution and that no other line of action would meet the requirements. During the Governors' conference at Rawalpindi in the last week of February, Lieutenant General Yaqub Khan in consultation with the Governor, wrote in his own hand an appreciation of the situation in East Pakistan and what might happen if a political solution was not found quickly, and handed it over to the Principal Staff Officer to the President. This was in conformity with what they had both said at the conference and in private meetings with the President. While there, they were also informed that the Assembly Session would be postponed from March 3 to some indefinite date. The decision, which had been taken by the President on February 22, was not to be broadcast; even the majority party leader would be kept in the dark till February 28, a night before the official announcement by the President. Both of them had pleaded for a reversal of decision but to no avail. They told the President, 'Please don't do it. The Bengalis would not take it.' Most of the people attending the conference used to take great pains to find out what the President was thinking and would not utter anything which might displease him. During the conference no one spoke except Lieutenant General Rakhman Gul, Governor of Sind who supported Admiral Ahsan. He said to the President that he (President) could only appeal to Sheikh Mujib not to use his brutal majority in the National Assembly but the session should be allowed to start on schedule. This pleading continued even on their return to Dacca on the telephone, by letters and signals and till the decision was publicly announced. The President's set answer was that he was acting in the supreme interests of the nation. It was, like other decisions, his personal decision and not based on any careful evaluations. His decisions were always made on a personal basis. Conduct of affairs was not by institutions but by an individual who was influenced by different people and by his own varying moods. Some of the institutions had already been destroyed before him, the remaining disappeared under him. Hardly any conference was held to discuss and weigh ideas, no evaluation or appreciation was centrally carried out to arrive at a decision or plan the strategy to be followed in conducting the affairs of state. It would be right to say that decisions were made on a day to day basis, and planning on

a six months basis, as was evident from his various promises to hand over power after six months.

On their return to Dacca the Governor and the Martial Law Administrator found that the situation had changed for the worse. The people's mood was most agitational and pressure tactics of the extremist elements had brought about some kind of a mob rule. Even the visit of West Pakistani political leaders at this time was viewed with suspicion and construed as a conspiracy. During this period, the action taken by Indian administration in the neighbouring West Bengal state against the Naxalites was forcing many of them into East Pakistan. Their infiltration was increasing and they were given asylum by fellow travellers. This was another dangerous trend. They naturally joined hands with the local communists who were already busy in their clandestine preparations for an armed revolution of peasants and workers They set out to prepare themselves increasingly for capitalizing on any chance offered by civil upheaval or any political or economic crisis. The creed of terrorism was openly propagated. They had already created a scare in Dacca by causing an explosion in the office of the Bureau of National Reconstruction on February 18. In this tension-charged atmosphere, slogans urging a class struggle emanating from the Purbo Bangal Communist Party started appearing on the walls in different towns.

To meet serious internal security contingencies a plan named "Blitz" was drawn up as far back as December 1970, and instructions were issued to formation headquarters. This plan dealt with the contingency of a widespread and general internal security situation calling for imposition of Section 144,* cessation of political activity, large scale arrests and press censorship. The plan was designed to meet the worst contingency arising out of any political mass upsurge, and open defiance of Martial Law. This according to the plan might result by declaration of independent Bengal, an anarchist movement by the leftists to frustrate the elections, or the majority party resorting to a mass movement outside the Assembly. However, the plan was to be put into action

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* *Section 144 (Pakistan Penal Code)*

"Whoever, being armed with any deadly weapon, or with anything which, used as a weapon of offence, is likely to cause death, is a member of an unlawful assembly, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both."

only after personal clearance from Chief Martial Law Administrator. By February 26, the situation had become extremely tense and it had become difficult to predict coming events. Therefore, the Martial Law Administrator requested the Principal Staff Officer to the President to permit him to put "Blitz" into operation at his own discretion. Permission was granted the same day but only in case all communications between Dacca and Rawalpindi broke down and the Chief Martial Law Administrator could not be consulted. HQ CMLA also cautioned the Martial Law Administrator to take precautions to make clear to the troops what should be done in what contingency. Later, on February 27, he was allowed to use discretion if he considered that the time taken to get orders from the Chief Martial Law Administrator would seriously jeopardize the success of "Blitz."

Now came the last but one act of the drama which pushed the people of East Pakistan to revolt. A last effort was made by the Governor to advise the President to fix a date for the summoning of the National Assembly instead of indefinite postponement. But to no avail. The President was sure of his own grounds and advised the Governor to inform Mujib of his decision. The President's message of postponement of the Assembly session was read out in the presence of the Martial Law Administrator, to Sheikh Mujib who had been invited to the Government House in the evening on February 28. The message was listened to in stony silence and utter disappointment. Mujib's immediate reaction was that this news would be received with bitterness and resentment. He held no hopes and gave no guarantee against untoward developments. He, however, thought that fixing of a new date immediately would surely help him.

On March 1, 1971 amidst great excitement and in an atmosphere charged with tension came the Presidential announcement about postponement of the National Assembly Session to a later date, over the radio at 1305 hours. Within a few minutes of the announcement, and as if on a given signal, people from all walks of life struck work and headed towards Hotel Purbani, where Sheikh Mujib was holding a meeting with his MNAs. The crowd was armed with all sorts of lethal weapons like spears, iron rods, bamboo sticks. The staff at the Provincial Secretariat struck work and came out of the offices. Pakistan International Airlines employees also walked out bringing the domestic flights to a standstill. Lawyers and judges

of Dacca High Court brought out a procession. All of them, joined by slogan-chanting students, marched towards Hotel Purbani to hear Mujibur Rahman. The latter addressed a hurriedly called press conference. He said: 'Only for the sake of a minority party's disagreement the democratic process of constitution making has been obstructed and the National Assembly session has been postponed *sine die*. This is most unfortunate as far as we are concerned. We are the representatives of the majority people and we cannot allow it to go unchallenged. ....You will see history made if the conspirators fail to come to their senses.' He also announced a programme for the next 6 days which included observance of complete 'hartal' on March 2 and 3. It was apparent that the leaders and the people were in a mood of utter desperation. The moderates had been pushed into the background. They, including majority of East Pakistani officials, were mentally prepared for independence, or worse. The people had risen, they were in no mood to listen to speeches, they wanted action. The property of non-Bengalis in Jinnah Avenue, a fashionable shopping area of Dacca was set on fire. It was followed by cases of looting in Nawabpur area—a non-Bengali housing colony. The weapons and ammunition of the Narayanganj Rifle Club were forcibly taken away by a gang of students.

The Governor informed the President later in the day that situation in East Pakistan was reaching a point of no return. It could not be controlled except by political means. He also begged him to announce a date that night even if that had to be altered later. The same night the Governor was relieved of his responsibilities and Lieutenant General Sahabzada M. Yaqub Khan became Governor in addition to his duties as the Martial Law Administrator. The Governors in the other provinces were also made Martial Law Administrators. At the same time, General Yaqub, as Martial Law Administrator had independently reported to HQ CMLA that the political deadlock had driven Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the wall. He should not be expected to make concessions beyond those he had already agreed to. It was also pointed out that the spontaneous demonstrations in the streets clearly gave the forecasts of coming events.

CHAPTER IV

REVOLT IN EAST PAKISTAN

THE followers of the Awami League and the people under its influence revolted on March 1. They were joined by the extremists of other parties and communists of all hues and colours who were already preparing and biding their time for just this kind of opportunity. To start with, it was not a revolt against Pakistan or its ideology. It was a revolt against dictatorship. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, even if prudence had dictated him, could not keep in a low key the forces of anger and hatred which he and his followers had so carefully and persistently built and now unleashed. Gradually and surely he became a virtual prisoner in the hands of the extremists, the neo-nationalists and the intellectuals. He let himself be overwhelmed by the events instead of controlling them. The President's repeated advice to him through the Governor to keep calm and cool and not aggravate the law and order situation could not have been followed by him even if he had desired to do so. To call this phase of the Awami League's campaign as a non-violent civil disobedience movement to pressurize General Yahya Khan

to part with power would be a complete misnomer. The pent-up feelings and a roused anger of the Bengalis found expression in the destruction of life and property. Their vengeanace fell particularly on the defenceless and helpless non-Bengali minority who had sought refuge in East Pakistan after having been uprooted from their homes in India during the communal disturbances that accompanied the partition of the sub-continent in 1947. The degree of violence against the non-Bengali population showed the depth of Bengali bitterness. According to one estimate, "between 2 and 25 March, (extremists) killed, raped and burnt an estimated 100,000."* The Government remained reluctant to release stories of these terrible happenings in East Pakistan in order not to endanger lives of Bengalis in West Pakistan. Even a TV film made of these atrocities was never shown inside Pakistan.

Between March 2 and 6, there was a total hartal from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. as ordered by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. No business was carried out by anyone and none of the offices of the Central or Provincial Government or the semi-government agencies functioned. Dacca had collapsed into complete lawlessness. The militant students and angry and agitated crowds moved freely in the streets inciting people and erecting road-blocks. The scheme of things and the attitude of the Bengali leaders were quite clear after the incident in the afternoon on March 2. When a large procession was passing by the Farm Gate, where roads from the new Capital, the Airport and the town met, a stray army vehicle happened to pass by and the occupants were subjected to insults and brick-batting. Soldiers had to fire three shots in the air to get out of the milling crowd. This incident coincided with another incident in the University area where a student had accidentally killed his instructor with a·22 Rifle. The students exhibited the blood-stained clothes and the body of the instructor all over the town accusing the army of man-slaughter. National flags and the portraits of the founder of the nation were burnt in public and black flags were hoisted over the buildings. At places Bangladesh flag also appeared. Leaders of the National Awami Party and the Bangla National League (the erstwhile Pakistan National League) also jumped into the fray, and by their fiery speeches further encouraged the people to defiance. When Mujibur Rahman was calling the non-Bengali communities 'our sacred trust' and 'sons of the soil,' a wave of

* The *Daily Scotsman*, **Edinburgh, July 8, 1971.**

loot, plunder and killing was going on to threaten their very existence. Shops of non-Bengalis on Jinnah Avenue, Nawabpur Road, Thatiri Road, Shantinagar and other places were looted and burnt. Arms shops at Baitul-Mukarram, Shalimar Hotel on Mymensingh Road and Gulistan Cinema in Jinnah Avenue were also attacked and looted. All this happened on March 2. The process of elimination increased in intensity the following days. More non-Bengali localities were attacked and burnt, and their inhabitants killed. The wave of atrocities gradually engulfed the whole of the province. Worse affected was Chittagong where on March 3 and 4, in Ferozeshah Colony alone 700 houses were set on fire and their inmates, including women and children, were burnt to death. Those who tried to escape were pushed back into the fire. By the morning of March 3, everything had come to a standstill. East Pakistan was cut off from the rest of the world. The only communication between East and West was the Army and Air Force telephone links. On the same day the President extended an invitation to 12 elected leaders of the parliamentary groups in the National Assembly to meet at Dacca on March 10 in an effort to solve the constitutional crisis. Mujib rejected it.

Such a situation was beyond the control of the normal law-enforcing agencies, particularly, when a majority of their officers were affected by the Awami League movement and openly sided with the crowds. The police and the East Pakistan Rifles were patrolling Dacca but they were ineffective because of inclination and the magnitude of the problem. On March 2, at 8 p.m. at the behest of the Chief Secretary and the Inspector General of Police, curfew had been imposed, and some firing had to be resorted to as a result of which nine persons were killed and 151 wounded. Some of the bodies were taken the next day to a public meeting which was addressed by the Awami League Chief. On March 3, the CMLA ordered the troops deployed in the town to be withdrawn to the cantonment. The local commanders, knowing the position at first hand and the plight of the loyal and peace-loving citizens, protested, and as a compromise, the troops were allowed to concentrate at specified areas in the town. Curfew had to be re-imposed on March 3, but was again withdrawn on March 4. Mr. Rahman had said on Thursday (March 4) that if the troops did not return to barracks, the Awami League volunteers would resist them.'* The troops were however ordered back to the barracks on the guarantee of law and order given by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

* The *Statesman* Delhi, March 6, 1971.

This was a tactical mistake. The crowds and their leaders were jubilant when the army returned to the cantonments. They naturally thought that the troops were on the run. The action was taken as a sign of weakness and resulted in disillusionment with the Martial Law authorities. It produced a demoralizing effect on the troops and made complete nonsense of the military effectiveness. The troops must have been psychologically affected by the mass hysteria they had witnessed during the past one week. They might have visualized that something big was in the offing. On top of it, they were confined to barracks, their daily rations reduced and their movement restricted to the cantonments. No intelligence or news came from outside the cantonments. All this must surely have created an atmosphere of fear and distrust. The problem which was anyhow an enormous one considering the comparatively meagre number of loyal troops available, assumed even larger proportions in their minds. If there were cases of excessive use of force during the military action this state of mind must have been largely responsible for them, along with the brutalities and destruction caused by the rebels.

While all this was going on, Leiutenant General Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, who was also the Governor of East Pakistan in addition to being the MLA, held a conference of his senior commanders and staff to discuss the happenings on March 1. The unanimous and well-considered conclusion of all present was that the plan "Blitz" would no longer work and a political solution must be found. From then onwards General Yaqub started pressing for a political solution with greater vigour. He persistently informed the Principal Staff Officer to the President and the CMLA on the telephone and by signals about the gravity of the political situation and the impossibility of gauging it fully from a long distance, and advised the President to visit East Pakistan to see things for himself and take decisions on the spot. Early in the morning on March 4, he signalled 'I am still confident that by timely and bold political initiative we can still salvage sufficient pieces to get afloat. Every day counts. The President's earliest visit to defuse leaders and people in a mood of bitter desperation....' The same morning the President agreed to come over to East Pakistan, but at night at about 9.30 p.m., he changed his mind saying that his visit would not bring him any nearer to the solution. The same night, Major General Farman Ali Khan, who held a special Martial Law appointment on the Governor's staff, was despatched to Rawalpindi by a mid-night

flight with letters and the latest situation report to brief the President and convince him of the urgency of his visit. It was considered that the President was not well informed of the realities of the situation in East Pakistan. While Farman Ali was with the President the news of intended resignation of General Yaqub arrived. The President felt very bitter and considered that the General was getting cold feet and was trying to desert his post at a critical hour. Yaqub was persuaded to continue till another officer arrived to take over from him. The next morning, General Yaqub Khan submitted his formal resignation as he could not believe that any military solution could make sense in the existing situation. He was, therefore, unable to accept responsibility for implementing such a solution, which would mean large-scale killings of the unarmed civilians and would still achieve no useful purpose.

General Yaqub Khan was replaced by Leiutenant General Tikka Khan, who had the reputation of being tough and 'no nonsense' type of officer and a soldiers' soldier. Because of this reputation, his posting to East Pakistan created misapprehensions there and even Mujibur Rahman complained that the President had not consulted him. His appointment was also bitterly criticized in East Pakistan press. The interested political circles there started spreading rumours calling the general as brutal expert in antiguerilla operations and typical Punjabi Officer who had been brought over to East Pakistan to crush Bengalis. Tikka Khan landed in the afternoon on March 7, in a comparatively calm law and order atmosphere. This momentary lull had been generated by three factors. Firstly, the people must have been tired by continuous marching in processions, agitation and generally unlawful activities. Secondly, the President had announced the new date—March 25—for the National Assembly session. And lastly, Mujibur Rahman had adroitly skipped over the expected unilateral declaration of the independence of Bangladesh. This announcement was seriously considered by Mujibur Rahman and his advisers. But one thing which forced the Awami League leader to change his mind at the last minute was the clear warning of the use of maximum force in that eventuality given to his emissaries a night before by the then GOC 14 Division, Major General Khadim Hussain Raja. Instead, Mujibur Rahman had announced to expectant mammoth crowd which had gathered at Ramna Race Course on the afternoon of March 7, 1971, his decision to participate in the National Assembly

session provided his four demands were accepted before the session. He listed his demands as (1) the withdrawal of Martial Law (2) return of the troops to the barracks (3) inquiry into the killings and (4) transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people.

In a long statement, the same day, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman suggested a seven-point formula for immediate adoption if the President sincerely desired that the National Assembly, as the sovereign body of the elected representatives of the people, should function. The formula was as follows:—

a. Immediate withdrawal of Martial Law.

b. Transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people.

c. Immediate withdrawal by all military personnel to the barracks.

d. Immediate cessation of the military build-up and the heavy inflow of military personnel from the Western Wing.

e. Immediate and total cessation of firing upon civilians.

f. Non interference by the military authorities in the different branches of the Government functioning in Bangladesh and direction to desist from victimization of Government officers and employees.

g. Maintenance of law and order to be left exclusively to the police and the Bengali E.P.R. assisted, wherever necessary, by Awami League volunteers.*

A week-long programme comprising the following points was also announced the same day; it was to start from March 8:—

1. No-tax campaign to continue.

2. The Secretariat, Government and semi-government offices, High Court and other courts throughout Bangladesh, should continue to observe a hartal. Appropriate exemptions would be announced from time to time.

3. Railway and ports may function, but railway workers and port workers should not cooperate if railway or ports are used for the mobilization of forces for repressive purposes.

* The *Dawn*, Karachi, March 8, 1971.

4. Radio, Television and newspapers shall give full versions of our statements and shall not suppress news about the People's movement, otherwise Bengalis working in these establishments will not cooperate.

5. Only local and inter-district telephone communications shall function.

6. All educational institutions shall remain closed.

7. Banks shall not effect remittances to the Western Wing either through the State Bank or otherwise.

8. Black flags shall be hoisted on all buildings every day.

9. Hartal is withdrawn in all other spheres but complete or partial hartal may be declared at any moment depending upon the situation.

10. A Sangram Parishad (Council of Action) should be organised in each union, mohallah, thana, sub-division and district under the leadership of the local Awami League Units."[1]

It was also stated that fresh directive will be issued and clarifications of the programme and instructions about exemption from hartal would be announced from day to day. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also said: 'Pakistan, as it stands, is finished, there is no longer any hope of a settlement,....I will break them and bring them to their knees[2] After this there was no need of an outright declaration of Independence. It was clear that Bangladesh had come into existence, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had become the de facto ruler and his house and the Awami League offices had been turned into Presidency. Orders from the Central Government were defied. The Chief Justice of the East Pakistan High Court, with the full consent of the other Judges, declined to swear in the new Governor, Lieut-General Tikka Khan. According to the then prevailing procedure it was the constitutional duty of the Chief Justice—as a judge of the Provincial High Court—to administer the oath to the Governor, appointed by the President as notified through the Gazettee. But when the Chief Justice was contacted on the telephone, even before the commission of the Appointment of Governor and a copy of the oath—could be sent to him, he refused. Nor was any other judge of the East Pakistan

1. The *Dawn*, Karachi, March 8, 1971.

2. *Time Magazine*, New York, March 15, 1971.

High Court willing. Under the prevailing conditions, the East Pakistani Judges could only do it at the risk of their lives. This was exactly what the Chief Justice of Dacca High Court told Tikka Khan apologetically. The letter of appointment was therefore directed to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan who rushed to Dacca to administer the oath.

The new Governor and MLA, on his arrival, found that virtually entire Civil Administration in the province was hostile to Martial Law regime. Even the police was taking orders from the Awami League. The Inspector General of Police himself told the Governor that law and order was being maintained according to the directives issued by the Awami League High Command. The intelligence agencies, both Central and Provincial, were feeding either no information or providing intelligence which was false or biased and of no use. Tikka Khan was given no written directive laying down in detail, what he was expected to do. While saying goodbye to the President before leaving for Dacca he had himself told the President that his mission would be to keep the Army together and to keep the doors for political negotiations open. The President had given his approval to this plan of action. Tikka Khan somehow had to save the situation. He, therefore, alerted the garrison in East Pakistan not to take any action that might jeopardize the forthcoming political negotiations. As one of his duties, Tikka Khan tried to meet Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, but the Sheikh would agree to see him only in his own house. Therefore, the meeting unfortunately did not take place.

The Army, which had come under a lot of criticism before and had been accused of imaginary crimes, had become suddenly a target of more vehement attacks since late February 1971. The Awami League had a plan to deal with the Armed Forces which of course, was not made public. According to this plan logistic support to the Armed forces was to be denied, movement of troops was to be disrupted, water and power supply to all the cantonments was to be discontinued and their civil employees were to be stopped from working. As in the civil offices, spotters were appointed in the cantonments to observe those who might continue to work. Now this plan was put into action. The local population started hindering military movement by erecting road-blocks and other impediments. Bengali servants deserted. The tirade against the Armed Forces continued to mount. They were insulted and

abused. Most of the media of information—intellectuals, writers, poets and singers — joined in the mud-slinging. Serious attempts were made to starve them within the cantonments and confine them to their lines. The supply of fresh rations like vegetables, fruit, meat, poultry and other commodities, was stopped. Army contractors were harassed and told not to sell anything to the Army personnel and the supplies failed. Any civilian vehicles plying in and out of the cantonments were duly publicised in the press: 'Whose vehicles are these? They carry food for the Army'—thus ran a headline in 'The People', Dacca—the Awami League's mouth-piece—on March 23, giving the registration numbers of vehicles for the hooligans to take care of. The troops were living on *dal* and *chapati* out of their limited stocks. They even shared their meagre rations with those unfortunate people who were escaping by sea or air to save their lives and honour from the onslaughts of Awami League volunteers.

The abusive attacks against the Armed Forces reached their peak when 'The People' published an article on March 18, captioned "Withdraw Alien, Barbarous Army"—a most provocative piece of writing, full of utterly false stories about the Army's barbarities against the local population. General Tikka Khan wanted to arrest the editor and stop the publication of the paper, but the President, who was then in Dacca restrained him, saying, "Please don't do it., I am busy in delicate negotiations." He, however, promised to speak to Mujib about it. The next day the Brigade Commander at Dacca, while returning from a normal inspection visit to an East Bengal battalion at Joydebpur, 15 miles from Dacca, was stopped by a road-block near the railway crossing just outside the town. His escort, when trying to clear the way, was fired at. He had to clear three more road-blocks on the way before reaching Dacca. In the third week of March a young Lieutenant, while out shopping in Rangpur, was murdered and his body ripped open. It was later paraded through the bazaar. In a similar incident in the Jessore area on March 24, a military dodge carrying five Jawans including an officer was mobbed. The officer, exercising restraint, tried to pacify the crowd and talk his way out but the mob beat him and stabbed him. He later succumbed to his injuries. The mob took away four sten guns. The restraint of the armed forces was admirable but as one officer, who went through the ordeal, remarked: 'No army has been humiliated so much throughout the entire military history and no army has been kept in check and

under restraint for such a long time; and no army has borne all this with greater patience and forbearance.'

The Awami League leaders also stepped up their activities to subvert the loyalties of the East Pakistani troops, and their appeals fell on receptive ears. The identification of the East Pakistani officers with the current political movement, and their open support to the Awami League programme, increased the estrangement between them and the West Pakistani officers. Soon, they even stopped meeting each other socially and confined themselves to their respective groups. The Awami League High Command was being kept well informed of national and military secrets.

Colonel M.A.G. Osmany, a retired East Pakistani officer, was busy organising a para-military force to take on the regular troops. It appeared that they were getting ready for a show-down with the Army. Reports were pouring into the Eastern Command Headquarters about the Awami League volunteers' training by ex-servicemen and reserve officers seconded to the civil government. Colleges and schools began to look like military training camps. The University Campus was a base for such activities in Dacca and huge amounts of arms and ammunition had been stored there. Some foreign press reporters had estimated that there were about 2,00,000 weapons in East Pakistan on March 25, 1971. Earnest Weatherall, in a voicecast from New Delhi put on the air by the Columbia Broadcasting System, reported: 'It is believed that Sheikh Mujib had been receiving supplies of small arms from outside sources for a long period and they were kept hidden till the crunch came from Yahya', and added 'Many Western diplomats in New Delhi feel these weapons could only have come from India.'* Later it was discovered that weapons had also arrived in November and December 1970 along with relief goods after the great cyclone in the middle of November. Owing to the breakdown of intelligence system in which the police and intelligence were siding with the Awami League movement, most of the large quantities of arms and ammunition remained undiscovered by the Martial Law Authorities. Whatever were known could not be recovered without proper military action. Ex-soldiers, sailors and airmen, including ex-members of the Pakistan National Guard, Mujahids, Ansar, ex-policemen and all others who had any training with arms were

* The *Dawn*, Karachi, April 2, 1971.

being organised. On March 12, *The People* reported: 'Ex-Army, Navy, unified under General Majid.' Under this heading appeared a story starting as follows: 'Two ex-servicemen, Captain Nowab Hossain and Captain Ashraf Ahmed, said in Dacca yesterday that they were ready to strike decisive blow to those who would stand in the way of the emancipation of Bangladesh.' A later para said: 'The meeting (of naval personnel of Bangladesh on March 20) demanded that a joint command of Army, Navy and Air Force should be immediately set up for liberating Bangladesh and all Navy, Army and Air Force personnel should join it.'

All these activities were continuing and in fact gaining added momentum when the President and the Awami League Chief were busy in Dacca in serious political discussions. The President had at last arrived there in the afternoon on March 15, and was greeted by none but his army 'chaps', as 'The People' reported, and was said to be the 'guest of Bangladesh.' The East Pakistan Police had refused to provide protection to him without the permission of the Awami League Chief. The same evening a conference was held at the President's House which was attended by General Abdul Hamid Khan, Chief of Staff, Army, Lieut-General Tikka Khan, Governor designate and MLA, senior military and civil officers (both East and West Pakistanis) and the President's staff. It was a briefing conference and the President was informed of the latest situation in the province. He looked cheerful and full of confidence and informed the gathering that he had invited Mujibur Rahman the next day to have preliminary '*bat-cheet*.' (talk or chat).

The meeting between the President and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was held the next day, as scheduled, in the President's House. No one else was present from either side. It is not known what exactly transpired between the two. A great deal of shouting and counter-shouting could be heard from behind the doors. Mujib's reaction to this stormy meeting is not known, but the President was not satisfied. He called General Tikka Khan the same night and told him that the negotiations were not proceeding too well with Mujib and he should be prepared, if called upon, to take action. Late at night, GOC 14 Division, Major General Khadim Hussain Raja, and the Adviser to the Governor, Major General Rao Farman Ali Khan, were summoned by Tikka Khan and were ordered to make plan for a possible emergency. This was the beginning of the emergency plan which was later put into action in the early hours

of March 26. On March 20, and 21, however, the President had put General Tikka Khan at rest by informing him that he was making some headway in his negotiations and a federation of Pakistan with plenty of autonomy for the Eastern Wing was emerging. But the planning continued as the commanders apprehended that they might suddenly be ordered into action.

At that time the quantum of troops in the Eastern Command was only an infantry division comprising the following. They were located in different cantonments and camps all over the province, with the divisional headquarters at Dacca:—

Name	*Number*	
Divisional Headquarters	1	
Brigade Headquarters	4	
Infantry Battalions (all West Pakistanis)	12	These battalions had officers from East and West both.
Infantry Battalions (all East Pakistanis)	6	
National Service Battalion (all East Pakistanis)	1	
Armoured Regiment (mixed East and West Pakistanis)	1	
Commando Battalion (Mixed)	1	
Field Regiment Artillery (Mixed)	5	
Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment (Mixed)	1	
Mortar Batteries (120 mm) (Mixed)	2	
East Pakistan Rifles (All East Pakistanis except some officers/JCOs)	16 wings. (strength 13,000)	

The above included two West Pakistani battalions which were soon to return to West Pakistan on relief and whose advance parties had already left, reducing their strength to 400 all told. One battalion of East Bengal Regiment was similarly preparing to go on relief to West Pakistan and was on scale 'Z', that is 75% of its total was on leave. One newly-raised East Bengal battalion was awaiting embarkation in Chittagong for a move to West Pakistan. The total of West Pakistani troops in the division at that time was about 12,000.

At the end of February 1971, an Infantry Brigade from Quetta was earmarked to move to the Eastern Command. Out of its two battalions only about 400 men each had been flown in without heavy weapons and baggage by March 3 and all other movement was stopped due to the adverse propaganda of a troops build-up in East Pakistan. Also that East Pakistani element of the PAF in East Pakistan, which was over 50 per cent of the total strength had threatened mutiny on March 3, if troops continued to move by Pakistan International Airlines' Boeings. The remainder of the Brigade, including rear parties and heavy weapons and baggage of the two battalions, stayed in Karachi. No units moved after that till March 26, but it does not mean that troop movement was altogether stopped. Leave parties continued moving, deficiencies in the existing units and formations were made up. These movements were carried out in civilian clothes as was the normal practice when flying via Sri Lanka.

It would be interesting here to dwell on the planning for the emergency. General Tikka Khan was not given any written directive or operational instructions. He was just told to get prepared if called upon to take action. Later, he would be instructed verbally to go ahead and restore the government's authority. He was told nothing either about the purpose or the social or political objectives in view. The order was just 'restore government authority.' It was purely a personal decision of the President. No appreciation or evaluation was carried out at the appropriate level before arriving at such a serious decision. The Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Home Affairs and other branches concerned of the Central or Provincial Governments do not seem to have been consulted. The GHQ knew nothing of this. The Chief of Staff, being very close to the President, might have known his mind, but he never warned any one at the GHQ, nor did he ask any studies of the problems to be carried out. Various aspects of such drastic action, therefore, remained unevaluated. Its national and international implications were not anticipated. The likely attitude of the East Pakistani Officers, both civil and military, in case of such an action, was scarcely considered. The possible results of the defection, desertion or mutiny of the East Pakistani element of the armed forces in the situation, and its effects on their efficiency as a fighting machine, remained ungauged. If a thorough analysis of the planned action had been carried out, at least the exodus to India and its repercussions could have been visualised. In spite of all the mistakes of

judgement and the unplanned manner it was launched, if Yahya Khan had followed his military action with a reasonable political solution immediately he would have still got away with it.

The negotiations between the President and the Awami League leaders went on. All eyes, particularly in Pakistan, were focussed on the President's House at Dacca, and at many places special prayers were held for the success of the talks. The extreme care in planning which was required for such delicate negotiations at an extremely crucial hour of Pakistani history was not visible. Even the Presidential team at the negotiating table, consisting of Justice Cornelius, Mr. M.M. Ahmad, Lieut-General S.G.M. Peerzada and Colonel Hasan, the Deputy Judge Advocate General of the Army, was drawn entirely from West Pakistan. There were many qualified East Pakistanis who could have contributed better, but their services were not asked for. However, the negotiations were kept secret. The public knew of their progress through cryptic statements of the leaders to the press. It seemed that the talks had their ups and downs. By March 23, there was definite optimism in the President's camp. The day, however, was celebrated in East Pakistan as Resistance Day instead of Republic Day. Bangladesh flags replaced the black flags which had flown since March 2. The Pakistan Flag was confined to the cantonments. There were ex-soldiers' rallies where rebellious speeches were made; and armed students paraded the streets. On the same day, leaders of the Council Muslim League, the Jamiat-Ulema-i-Islam and the National Awami Party (Wali Group) called on Mujib but all failed to persuade him to show some flexibility. This failure was duly reported to the President.

In the forenoon, the same day, the President arrived at Flag Staff House, Dacca Cantonment—the official residence of General Tikka Khan—and ordered him to get ready to put the Emergency Plan into operation at short notice. The formations and units were still ignorant of this plan or any action to be taken. On March 24, therefore, senior officers from Dacca were flown to all other cantonments and camps to deliver these orders and to brief the commanders about the action to be taken. Later, the question of H-Hour, the time to start the operation to restore government authority, came up for discussion. The President wanted the action to start after he had returned to Karachi on night of March 25 and spoken to the nation on March 26. But General Tikka Khan pointed out

that, considering the terrific speed at which events were moving, it might then be too late with the small garrison available to him. Even without taking into account the para-military forces, which were all East Pakistanis, the West Pakistani element in the Army in East Pakistan was heavily outnumbered by East Pakistanis. The Chittagong garrison was the weakest from this point of view. Taking all these factors into consideration, the time was fixed at 0100 hours on March 26.

Thus came to an end the first 25 days of March 1971—a period which brought the country to a position which no other had ever faced.

CHAPTER V

INSURGENCY 1

LIEUT-GENERAL Tikka Khan's directive, operative till April 10, 1971 comprised the following main points:—

a. Disarming of the East Bengal Regiment Battalions, the East Pakistan Rifles and the Police.

b. Security of the cantonments.

c. Security of the Chittagong Naval Base.

d. Control of airfields including those at Lalmunirhat and Ishurdi.

e. Security of towns.

The general plan based on this directive was approved by the COS, Army. However, plan for the action in Dacca, the most important town of the province and the hub of political activity

and resistance, was presented to the President in the presence of the COS on March 24 and approved by him. All orders and instructions to brigades were issued verbally through senior officers acting as couriers on the same day.

Surprisingly, there was an uneasy calm in Dacca on March 24 and 25. People were expecting some sort of action by the Armed Forces and a visible movement of the people out of Dacca had commenced. The President's departure from Dacca at 7.30 p.m. on March 25 was kept secret but every one knew as soon as he left. Wing Commander Khondkar, an East Pakistani officer and second-in-command of the Pakistan Air Force in Dacca who was seeing off the President had at once passed the information on telephone to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The departure was a signal for hectic activity. Road blocks and barricades appeared all over Dacca. Commanders had been briefed in the morning individually, and as a result there was abnormal movement in the cantonment that day which must have also given a very good idea of the pending action.

57 Brigade was allotted the task of clearing Dacca. The given objective was to crush the rebellion and bring the town under control by early morning on March 26, 1971. Besides its own infantry, a troop of tanks was placed under command which was to act as show of force only and assist in removing the road blocks. The troops had strict orders to fire back only when fired at and to use force only where resistance might be offered. They were, however, instructed to fire into the air at intervals when on the move, to create a psychological effect on the rebels and to scare away the crowds from the streets. Without warning, the various columns of troops moved into Dacca, at the given time of 0100 hours on March 26, and commenced their advance to their various objectives—the Central Exchange, the State Bank, Radio and TV Stations, the Police Armoury, the Iqbal, Jagan Nath and Liaquat Halls in the University Campus where caches of arms were located, and the East Pakistan Rifles Centre at Pilkhana.

Sheikh Mujib was arrested from his residence in Dhan Mandi at 0130 hours, after some resistance by his followers at road blocks around his house. No other leader of importance was found at the given places that night. Why did Mujib stay back and allow other leaders to run away or go underground? His own answer given to the Station Commander, Dacca, was that he wanted to save

Pakistan. During his stay with the station commander for about a week before he was sent to West Pakistan, he repeated this many times. His colleagues must have cleared out earlier or must have gone underground. Anyway, without the assistance of the local police, their arrests could not have been effected by the Army.

The telephone exchange was switched off at 0200 hours. By that time all other objectives had been achieved except the University area, the reserve police lines and the EPR at Pilkhana. The latter were soon disarmed after some resistance. The reserve police offered stiff resistance and suffered heavy casualties. In the ensuing battle, in which rocket launchers and recoilless rifles were used, their barracks caught fire. They were, however, disarmed by 0300 hours. The toughest fight was given by the University Campus, particularly by the Iqbal and Jagan Nath Halls. It will be remembered that the University had been closed on March 1 and most of the students had gone home. In place of students, well-armed militant elements of the Awami League had moved in. Besides small arms fire, mortar fire was encountered there. After due warning, the Army had to use rocket launchers to break open some rooms of the Halls. From the sound of fire during that fateful night in Dacca, it appeared as if there was an actual war on with modern weapons. By 0500 hours, the Halls had been cleared of the rebels and calm prevailed at the University Campus. After that it was quiet in Dacca. Next morning a visitor after going round the town formed the impression that the effect of the previous night's military action was total. A great amount of Indian weapons and a number of non-Bengali girls were recovered from Iqbal Hall where they had been kept as prostitutes. During this operation, the Army suffered four casualties, while on the civil side 97 bodies were moved to different hospitals. The official estimate of dead was about 150, the other estimates went beyond the figure of 500. Narayanganj, an adjoining town and river port, took another three days to clear as it was found to be a stronghold of ex-servicemen, who had presumably withdrawn from Dacca and organised strong defences with the assistance of local population along the only road leading into it.

A wrong approach on censorship was the rounding up of the 37 foreign news correspondents, photographers and TV camera men and deporting them out of East Pakistan. The way this action was taken did not endear the Army to them. Some of them were

roughly handled, their baggage searched and films extracted out of their cameras. At least one of them threatened before departure that he would get his own back. Pakistan's case went by default. These expelled newsmen turned Yahya into another Chengez Khan and Tikka Khan into 'Butcher of Bengal.' The foreign information media moved into India and naturally relied on information picked up from Indian sources or the refugees fleeing from East Pakistan. Their highly coloured and exaggerated accounts did a lot of damage to Pakistan and its Armed Forces.

In the meantime, troops in other cantonments had acted as ordered. Major General Rao Farman Ali Khan was detailed and flown on March 24 to brief commander 107 Brigade, in Jessore. The mission given to the latter was to:—

a. Take over the civil administration.

b. Disconnect all telephone connections.

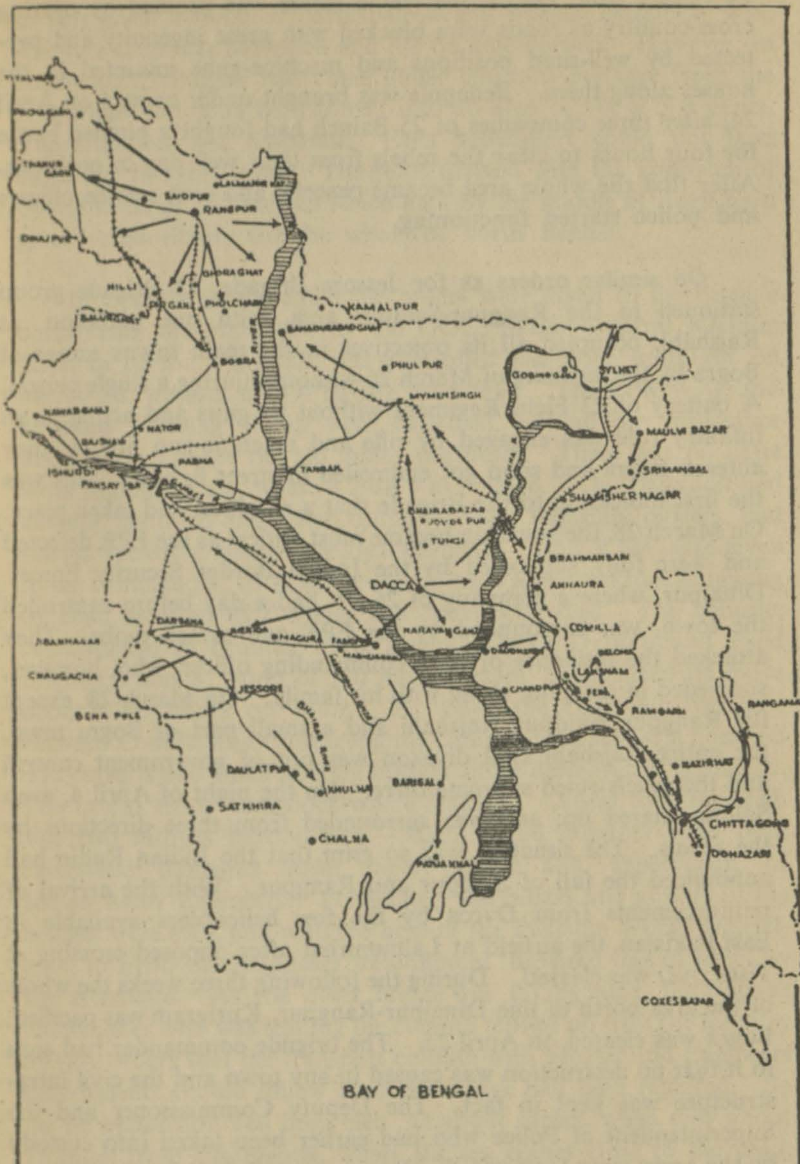
c. Guard railway stations, telephone exchanges, radio stations and other vital installations.

d. Disarm the EBR and the EPR if threatened by rebellion.

e. Arrest the political leaders.

The action started on a code word given by the GOC personally on the telephone in the afternoon on March 25. When it was passed on to the battalion commander in Jessore town, he was holding a meeting which was attended by all the dignitaries of the town including members of National and Provincial Assemblies and he could not take action till the appointed time. By that time they had all fled. Khulna was brought under control, with only a few casualties on March 26. There was complete calm in Jessore except that reports were pouring in of a conspiracy by elements of the EPR to kill all West Pakistanis. Suddenly the storm burst on March 30 when the whole of Jessore town rebelled and started slaughtering non-Bengali communities. The Indian Border Security Forces had also walked into Jessore along with foreign correspondents who photographed some of the killing done by rebels. It took three days to clear Jessore of the Indian Border Security Forces.

The columns which had been sent to Jhenida, Ishurdi and Benapole faced stiff opposition and could not advance beyond six



MOVEMENT OF PACIFYING COLUMNS MARCH-MAY 1971

miles of Jessore. By April 18, however, and with the arrival of 12 Punjab from Dacca, the whole sector was pacified by moving cross-country as roads were blocked with great ingenuity and protected by well-sited positions and machine-guns mounted in the houses along them. Benapole was brought under control on April 24, after three companies of 25 Baluch had fought a pitched battle for four hours to clear the rebels from their well dug-in positions. After that the whole area became peaceful and civil service officers and police started functioning.

On similar orders as for Jessore Brigade, 23 Brigade group stationed in the Rangpur-Saidpur area, with one battalion at Rajshahi, occupied all its objectives in the main towns except at Bogra by the morning of March 26 without injuring a single person. A battery of 23 Field Regiment without its guns and acting in an infantry role was engaged by rifle and machine-gun fire as they entered Bogra and soon got embroiled in street fighting. This was the first indication to the Brigade that a rebellion had taken place. On March 28, the situation became most critical as the EPR defected and were fully supported by the Indian Border Security Forces. Dinajpur, where a company of 26 FF had a day before controlled the town, was surrounded by the EPR and armed mobs. They attacked the residence of EPR commanding officer, who, however, succeeded in escaping along with his family. On March 28, except for Rangpur, Saidpur, Rajshahi and a small part of Bogra town, the entire Rajshahi civil division was out of government control and the rebels ruled supreme there. On the night of April 4, even Saidpur flared up, and was surrounded from three directions by the rebels. The situation was so grim that the Indian Radio had announced the fall of Saidpur and Rangpur. With the arrival of reinforcements from Dacca by the few helicopters available in East Pakistan, the airfield at Lalmunirhat after opposed crossing at Tista river was cleared. During the following three weeks the whole of the area north of line Dinajpur-Rangpur, Kurigram was pacified. Bogra was cleared on April 25. The brigade commander had seen to it that no destruction was caused in any town and the civil infrastructure was kept in tact. The Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police who had earlier been taken into custody by the army, were reinstated. It was ensured that they carried out their responsibilities without interference. All acts of miscreants, including those of throwing grenades and laying of mines, were punished by the civil authorities. The response of the police and

Mujahids who remained behind was commendable. They were in fact given a sense of participation and worked extremely well. The jute crop was harvested and life became normal. However, in Rajshahi, 25 Punjab had come under constant pressure from the rebels and had soon been forced into an area of 500 x 500 yards. The situation was desperate. Even helicopters could not land there due to rebel firing. The relief arrived with the approach of the elements of 16 Division which had, by the middle of April,been given responsibility for the whole of north Bengal.

In Comilla Sector again the orders were given to the brigade commander on March 24 by the GOC, Major General Khadim Raja, in person. Comilla was controlled just after midnight on March 26, without a shot having been fired. The EPR wing and Mujahid Training Camp were disarmed without any resistance although the police put up minor resistance. There was no news from Brahmanbaria, where 4 EBR was located. This battalion had actually mutinied and, after killing its West Pakistani officers, had started operating against the loyal elements. One of the tasks given to the commander, 53 Brigade, was to send a column to Chittagong by road as soon as Comilla had been controlled. The column, consisting of 24 Frontier Force Regiment (FF), Detachment Field Engineers and a troop of 120 mm Mortars, commenced its move about 0100 hours on March 26. Over the 105-mile distance between Comilla and Chittagong the column came across a hundred odd culverts and small and big bridges either destroyed or damaged. The troops made diversions where feasible. Others they repaired. The two bridges beyond Feni—Mahuri and Subapur—had been extensively damaged under expert advice and supervision of Indian Army Engineers. Fortunately the pillars and girders of the bridges were safe, and with the help of the Pakistan Works Department in Feni, the Engineers' detachment repaired one of them by the afternoon. As the other bridge was taking time, the brigade commander who was leading the column moved off with the infantry leaving orders that the transport column with Mortar and Engineers detachments should follow after the bridge had been repaired. So far no opposition had been met. At about sunset, when only about 15 miles from Chittagong, where the sea comes close to the road, the head of the column came under intense fire from the high ground on their left. The commanding officer of the battalion sent a company around to deal with this but the brigade commander decided to give rest to the troops who had been on their feet for

past 24 hours.. Next morning, March 27, the company which had gone out and had lost its way was attacked by large mobs. Another company was sent to extricate them and disperse the mobs. Lt Colonel Shahpur Khan, the commanding officer, was killed by a light machine-gun burst while resting under a tree after the battle. From now onwards the column started coming across opposition at every two miles. There were ambushes and well laid out obstacles and barricades on the roads. The main battle, however, was fought near Faujdarhat. This place is famous for its Cadet College. It was learnt later that two days earlier men of the East Pakistan Rifles had murdered its Principal and the Adjutant, a young army captain. The latter's wife was raped by a number of them. When she recovered consciousness and was walking towards Chittagong in a daze, she was mercifully rescued by an old Bengali. He nursed her and arranged to hand her over to the loyal army. In the vicinity of the Cadet College, an empty train had been turned into a number of strong points and road-blocks had been erected at every few hundered yards. The column at last succeeded in reaching the outskirts of Chittagong at sunset on March 28 where 9 EBR which had earlier deserted the East Bengal Regimental Centre and elements of the EPR had occupied the heights along the water reservoirs and the Ispahani colony.

On March 26, there had been no news from Chittagong, as communications with that town had been severed. But Lt Colonel S.H. Fatmi, commanding officer 20 Baluch, had acted as ordered. He had been briefed like other commanders on March 24 to disarm the East Bengal Regimental Centre (EBRC) which had at that time a strength of about 2500 men. They included the rank and file of 9 EBR which was being newly raised. Fatmi was told not to bother about 8 EBR and the EPR. Accordingly, just after midnight on March 26, when 20 Baluch moved into EBRC to occupy its magazines, they did not find the Centre asleep but ready for battle. In the ensuing skirmish in the dark approximately 200 men were killed. All the trained soldiers, numbering about 1300 escaped, leaving behind untrained recruits who were, during the following days, discharged from service. 8 EBR, which was stationed next door to the Centre, had earlier moved into the hills overlooking it, under its second-in-command, Major Ziaur Rahman, after having murdered its commanding officer. He alerted the Centre and the EPR to revolt and within the next week the other five battalions of the EBR, stationed in East Pakistan, the whole of the EPR and the armed

police revolted and took up arms against Pakistan. Ziaur Rahman became famous as he was the first man to announce the formation of the Provisional Government of Bangladesh from the Chittagong Radio Station on March 26.

His battalion, which had soon been joined by some police and elements from the EBR Centre, who had deserted after having killed most of the West Pakistani officers, their wives and children, attacked 20 Baluch in the morning on March 26. After having failed there, they along with the EPR from their Pahartali barracks and some police, under the unified command of Bengali officers, occupied whole of Chittagong town. Here they were joined by students and other armed people of the town, and together they went all out for the non-Bengali population. The latter had already suffered a great deal since March 1. Now their killings became more organised and slaughter houses were used for the purpose. The management of the mills and their families became special targets. Individual and group barbarity, as one eyewitness said, was beyond words.

Luckily, the Naval Base and the airfield were secured by the Navy and the harbour and the port area by the company of 31 Punjab which had earlier come as an advance party of the battalion on relief. A platoon of this company was also able to occupy Tiger pass, standing between the town and the port, the same day. This timely action kept peace in the nearby localities. By March 28, 20 Baluch had cleared some areas and the arrival of another battalion from Karachi together with the Comilla column which had entered the town from Feni side brought the town under control on March 31. The radio station, which was masquerading as Bangladesh Radio, took another two days to clear with the help of the air force. The rebels, thereupon, dispersed and caused havoc in the outlying areas.

Earlier on, it had been decided not to use East Pakistani troops for these operations in order that their loyalty should not be put to the test. However, precautions were taken to ensure that some units of the East Bengal Regiment were split into company groups and stationed at various places. But following the mutiny in Chittagong, 2 EBR, located in Joydebpur in the north of Dacca, with a company each at Tongi, Ghazipur, Tangail and Mymensingh revolted on March 28 along with the Bengalis serving in the

Ministry of Defence Constabulary and the Field Intelligence Unit. They had also killed their few West Pakistani officers, their women and infants. It was therefore decided to disarm all East Pakistani troops. This was soon accomplished without any difficulty in mixed units. 1 EBR, located north of Jessore, was disarmed on March 30 after some resistance. 10 EBR, a National Service battalion consisting of students under training, where desertion had already occurred, was sent on leave on March 26 and the unit was disbanded. However, 3 EBR in the Saidpur area, and 4 EBR in the Comilla sector were only partly disarmed. Most of them revolted and moved towards Hilli and Sylhet respectively and eventually into India along with their officers. The East Pakistan Rifles and the armed element of the Police had already mutinied and the former, who also had West Pakistani officers and a small proportion of other ranks had also killed them and their wives and children. The mutiny of the armed East Pakistani element was complete. While retreating into India they had organised a large force in their respective areas with the help of the Indian Border Security Forces, the EPR and the civilians. They had also helped in attacking non-Bengali communities on their way out. 27 Baluch company in Kushtia and the 25 Punjab company at Pabna were all massacred by the EPR, the police and the mobs as they were dispersed all over the towns in small penny packets.

The mutiny of the East Pakistan Rifles and the police and particularly that of the East Bengal Regiment who were highly trained professional battalions, came as a great shock to most Pakistanis. Having been allowed to take orders from the Awami League for the last 25 days the EPR and the police could not have suddenly done otherwise. It would, however, be wrong to assume that all of them revolted by free choice. A large number of them must have been forced by the circumstances and individual and group pressures. The Armed Forces could not possibly have remained uninfected by the passion and frenzy that had taken hold of the common people. The powerful and persistent appeal to regionalism and class struggle was bound to influence them. The natural patriotism of the armed forces was gradually turning to Bengali nationalism in the case of East Pakistan personnel and regional loyalty was replacing loyalty to the nation. The excessive freedom allowed to the politicians to pursue the Bangladesh Movement, the lack of military traditions in the region, and the unbridled propagation of grievances facilitated the process. The sympathies of East Pakistani servicemen

with the Awami League and its programme were well known. It had been visualised that, in case of serious political agitation turning into civil strife, they might be involved. But the depth of their emotions, the degree of their attachment and violence of their reaction, were perhaps never adequately gauged. It was difficult to believe that any officer or jawan of the Armed Forces could ever be disloyal to the country. There was a tendency to overlook the realities and take the available intelligence on the subject lightly. There was a definite contradiction in the thinking of the high command. On the one hand it intended to deal with a possible upsurge of Bengali nationalism, and on the other it assumed the loyalty of the Bengali troops. In the absence of any categorization of the degree of loyalty, all Bengali troops in East Pakistan were treated as suspects. This clearly created resentment amongst those who remained basically loyal. They were caught between two fires. On the one hand, they were suspected by their own people; on the other, they were mistrusted by the Government; as a result they reacted unreasonably. If, in April, May or even June, the President and his advisers had tried to appreciate their sentiments, and made an earnest endeavour to get them back into the fold, a large number of them would have responded, as the results of the half-hearted amnesty announced much later proved.

To turn to the story of the operations, pressures were being built up all around. The EBR battalions, which had revolted were organising the EPR, the ex-soldiers, the Mujahids, the Ansar, the police and the civilians in order to put up resistance. In addition to the arms already with them, and the 45,000 rifles stored at various police stations for the Ansar, which had mostly been taken over by them, arms and ammunition from India were pouring in. The EPR detachments from the border outposts were concentrating on attacking the loyal garrisons or resisting their operations. The Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) had advanced into the outskirts of Jessore and Sylhet along with the rebels. Some Indian BSF elements had reached Comilla and others had mounted an anti-aircraft gun on the building of the Agriculture University in Mymensingh. General Tikka Khan had therefore requested for an additional Infantry Division to meet all these dangers.

The unplanned way the military action was launched in East Pakistan would also be clear from the movement of 9 Infantry Division (Major General Shaukat Riza) to East Pakistan. This

Division was selected because it was conveniently placed in Kharian. Its important role in the defensive plans of the country and its particular training for that role were overlooked. A warning order to the division was issued on the telephone on March 30, and the GOC was told just to move to Dacca from Lahore by PIA. The Division was still busy with Martial Law duties. The GOC visited the GHQ on his own to find out more about the move and his task. He could get only two minutes with the CGS. The orders were still 'just go'. From March 31, onward, frantic telephone calls started pouring in to enquire from the GOC when he was going to move. The Division commenced moving to Lahore by road on March 31, without any information of its future task or ultimate destination and only with the personal equpiment and weapons of the officers and the Jawans. Under the orders of the GHQ, no heavy equipment or weapon besides rifles and machine guns—not even guns or signal equipment—was required to be carried. If the units carried some wireless sets with them, it was entirely on their own initiative. The Division moved from Kharian to Lahore by road and then by PIA Boeings to Dacca. It is a tribute to the high training and morale, and the sound and quick planning at all levels of staff, that the move was completed in four nights starting from April 1. It says a lot about the efficiency and sense of duty of the PIA that, with their limited capacity, they flew out the Division in such a short time. It was indeed a marvellous performance by any standard.

On arrival in Dacca, the GOC was briefed at the Eastern Command HQ and the task given to him was to clear the rebels from area from Sylhet down to Chittagong by the end of May 1971. Its 27 Brigade was put under the command of 14 Division and ordered to move to Mymensingh. 313 Brigade was flown to Sylhet where a weak 31 Punjab, having wisely withdrawn to the airfield, was holding out against great odds. 117 Brigade was sent by air to Comilla and 53 Brigade, already there, was ordered to move to Chittagong to make way for it.

With the arrival of 9 Division, strong columns were sent to different places in the province in order to achieve the objectives laid down in the Eastern Command directive. Speed was of the utmost importance. It was feared that a respite would help the rebels to strengthen their defences based on the major rivers and also massacre the surviving non-Bengalis and loyal locals, some of

whom were being held as hostages by the rebels in almost every town under their control. In order to highlight the operations by troops and the opposition they had to clear to pacify the areas, the work of a few columns is narrated in some detail. After having taken over the Comilla garrison, 117 Brigade fanned out in battalion columns to clear the areas allotted to them. While leaving West Pakistan and even after arriving in East Pakistan, the troops were under the general impression that they would have to carry out a normal internal security role but they soon found themselves entangled in crushing a general revolt. 33 Baluch, with the task of clearing Chandpur, a town about 30 miles south came under heavy fire on the outskirts of Comilla, and the move became very slow. The GOC, along with the Brigade Commander, flew over the column in a Beaver to find out the cause of the delay, and came under heavy ground fire. Chandpur was only cleared after fighting four pitched but brief battles. Similarly, Akhaura was cleared after a pitched battle before moving on to the border.

A strong column of 57 Brigade was sent by road and river from Dacca to Rajshahi, a distance of 180 miles where 25 Punjab was under great pressure. This was a complicated operation which was well planned and vigorously executed. The column started on April 8, and reached Rajshahi on April 14. All logistic arrangements including river and road transport were on ad hoc basis. The Brigade columns had in fact covered 290 miles in seven days. The lightning speed with which the operation was carried out, broke the back of opposition and completely demoralized and dispersed the rebels in those areas.

In the meantime 16 Infantry Division had arrived from Quetta in a manner exactly similar to that described above in the case of 9 Infantry Division. The area of responsibility of the three Divisions in East Pakistan was fixed. 9 Division was made responsible for the area east of river Meghna, including the Sylhet, Comilla and Chittagong sectors, 14 Division for Mymensingh, Dacca and Jessore, and 16 Division was given the whole of north Bengal. With the availability of three divisions, the movements of the columns became more extensive. They moved on different routes, clearing towns and pacifying areas on the way. In these operations, numerous platoon, company and battalion actions were fought. There were, however, two occasions when brigade-size operations had to be launched involving the use of infantry, tanks, naval gun

boats and air support. Both these actions took place in the 14 Infantry Division's area of responsibility. The first one was the assault crossing of river Meghna and the capture of Bhairab Bazar bridge over it intact in order to link up with 9 Infantry Division operating from Comilla. The bridge was defended by 4 EBR who had earlier defected, and a large number of other armed personnel. The defences were well sited and extremely well prepared. The bridge had been prepared for demolition with the help of Indian Army Engineers. Its significance lay in its being the only bridge that connected Chittagong civil division with other parts of the Province. The importance of saving it became supreme. It was therefore decided to mount a combined operation in which two infantry battalions, two commando companies supported by a troop of tanks and a section of heavy mortars, a gun boat and fighter aircraft, were used. A few helicopters were also pressed into service and utilized for dropping troops behind the rebel lines. The operation, from the time it was launched, lasted for 48 hours, although the real fighting, which was heavy and included physical assault in order to clear the rebels from their dug-in defences, took only two hours. The rebels suffered 500 killed and left a very large quantity of arms and ammunition mostly of Indian and some of Czechoslovak origin. The other similar operation was launched to cross the river Padma in order to secure Goalundo Ghat.

All these operations were carried out under most disorganised logistical support, adverse weather and terrain conditions and lack of training for the particular task. As brought out earlier, troops had moved from West Pakistan with only their personal equipment and clothing. The meagre sources of such stores in East Pakistan could not last very long. There was a Logistic Area but it was designed to cater only for the needs of a Division and static installations and line of communications troops in East Pakistan. With the defection of East Pakistan personnel, its efficiency had been reduced by at least 60 per cent. No transport was available. Formations and units had to make their own ad hoc arrangements with the available civilian road and river transport. Within the units, load had to be carried on person: even JCOs carrying ammunition boxes on their heads were a common sight. The supply line of food could not keep up with the speed of the movement of troops. The troops spent nights in hastily-dug trenches even in rain and moved off the next day early in the morning. There were occasions when troops went without any food for a whole day.

There is at least one instance of a Brigade Commander getting only one *chapati* to eat in 26 hours. On account of continuous marching, footrot had become common among the troops, and their boots wore off in no time. After some time, some troops were without boots. Their single pairs of uniform were also wearing off fast.

Most of the troops, particularly those newly arriving from West Pakistan had not seen so much water before, in normal life or during training. For the first time, they were coming across porous land and heavy rains. The rain itself was completely different from what they had been used to. As if this was not enough, they suddenly started coming across leaches, jute moths and other obnoxious and injurious insects and creatures common in East Pakistan.

The only training they had ever carried out was for war and defence of their country against a known enemy; they also had some training in Internal Security designed to prepare them for assistance in the restoration of law and order if and when called upon by civil authorities. They had never, except, for a few officers, been trained in counter-insurgency operations. The present operations were altogether different, and indeed strange, for them. They were subject to various restrictions not normal in war operations. The enemy was not always known or pinpointed. Nor did they enjoy the normal facilities of internal security operations, where they could draw a line, give proper warning and use minimum force if need arose. They just had to retaliate when obstructed or fired upon.

It was all very strange and uncalled for and against all the rules they had been so meticulously taught. At the same time they were thoroughly discouraged by the strange behaviour of the public, who they believed to be their brothers in faith and fellow countrymen. But still they carried on. The sacredness of their mission to save the country from disintegration, their ingrained toughness, and their discipline kept them going and they never complained of hardship or the peculiar nature of their operations.

By April 10, 1971, the objectives set by Lieut-General Tikka Khan had been achieved, law and order had been restored in the areas specified in his directive, and Government authority had been re-established. On April 11, Lieut-General A.A.K. Niazi had

become Commander, Eastern Command, relieving General Tikka Khan of this additional responsibility and leaving him as the Governor and Martial Law Administrator. Lieut-General Niazi had issued a new operational directive for further operations, which would be carried out in the following five phases:—

Phase I — Clearing of all major border towns and sealing of the routes of infiltration.

Phase II — Clearing and holding of Chittagong Base and keeping it safe from artillery and mortar fire.

Phase III — Opening of essential river, roads and rail communications.

Phase IV — Clearing of all towns in the interior and the coastal area.

Phase V — Combing of the whole of the province and elimination of rebels/infiltrators.

May 15, 1971, was set as the last date for the achievement of these objectives. Emphasis was laid on speed and multi-thrusts. At the same time some adjustment of the operational boundary of some formations was also carried out.

The tempo and speed of the operations did not decrease as a result of the change of command and the new regrouping. Some of the operations described earlier in this chapter took place under Niazi's command and have been narrated there to keep the continuity. By the last week of April, the Army had occupied all Border Outposts on approaches from India except the salient of Belonia—along the borders south of Comilla. In the former place the rebels had had time to consolidate their defences in about 150 square miles of area under their control. Minefields had been laid and bunkers had been built and Indian artillery support from across the border was available. It was feared that this territory might be utilized by the rebels for further incursions later. The area had to be cleared by launching a well-planned attack. By the same time, the river and sea routes had been cleared to Chittagong, Chalna and Khulna and traffic had started to and from these ports. Rail communications between Khulna and north

Bengal and from Dacca to Rangpur had been re-established but were operated only during the day. By the end of May, except for a few small pockets in the outlying and difficult area north of Rajshahi civil division, the rebels had been driven from all parts of East Pakistan. In the process about 32,000 rifles, 55 machine guns including heavy machine guns, 104 light machine guns, 18 mortars and 10 recoilless rifles were captured.

The speed with which the Army had advanced had caused considerable destruction to the villages along the routes where the troops advance had been fired at. The destruction had been mainly in the areas along 57 Brigade's advance. Speed being the essence of the operations, the troops used full force where opposed, in order to get to the borders as quickly as possible.

It will long be argued whether any mild action would have controlled the situation. With the troops available, complete breakdown of government authority and general arson, looting and killing by the extremists, the people in authority thought that only quick and strong action could save the province from complete chaos and genocide.

Another bye-product of the operations was the movement of refugees from East Pakistan. There was nothing new in it. There had almost been a continuous movement of refugees between India and Pakistan since Independence in 1947. The two main reasons behind this movement had always been insecurity and economic conditions. Whenever life had become insecure or economic conditions adverse on either side—India and Pakistan—a movement of refugees had begun. There have been exceptions too, like during the early sixties India uprooted Muslim Bengali peasant settlers from Assam and pushed them into East Pakistan. Insecurity of life and adversity of economic conditions had been prevailing in East Pakistan since 1969, and Hindu refugees had started trickling into India. This movement increased during the following years. It got a further impetus during 1970 as the long-drawn and hard-fought election campaign progressed. 'Thousands of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan minority religious community still continue to cross into India. They are trying to escape the pinch of a rapidly deteriorating economy and the growing feeling of insecurity that had developed since the Government lifted restrictions on political activities early this year.'* With the start of the

*The *Times*, London, October 13, 1970.

revolt by the Awami League about 400,000 Biharis had fled to India during the first three weeks of March 1971 to escape Bengali reign of terror against them. Similarly some sections of the minority community had also moved into India. Later the imaginary stories of atrocities and genocide broadcast by Calcutta radio and its constant advice to Hindus 'bhago, bhago, India bhago' (run, run, run to India), coupled with the terror generated by the rebels and the Indian Border Security Forces stampeded the population and sent hundreds of thousands over the borders into India. Foreign sources brought out the fact, and the East Pakistan Government admitted that 75 per cent of the refugees who moved to India were non-Muslims. And they were mostly from the border areas. It is significant to note that India had started alleging the influx of refugees into its territory before the Pakistan troops had even re-occupied the borders. As time passed, India went on multiplying the figures till they became fantastic and unbelievable. As a result of a check carried out by East Pakistan civil administration, the actual number came to about 2.8 millions.

In the beginning of June, India had shown signs of agreeing to the return of Pakistani refugees. For this purpose Reception Centres were established and a general amnesty was announced for all types of people including servicemen, and an agreement was arrived at for the distribution of United Nations help to refugees. A representative of the UN Secretary General had arrived at Dacca and a Pakistani team headed by Dr. A.M. Malik, Special Assistant to the President for Refugees and Rehabilitation, was detailed to work with him. Prince Sadruddin Agha Khan, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, had also completed his discussions with Pakistani authorities about the arrangements made for the return of the refugees. Mr. John Kelly, with a great reputation for humanitarian work, had arrived in Dacca as the representative of UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as part of the UN team. In the meantime, however, the Indians had had second thoughts and did not agree to any of the UN proposals. In fact, they openly obstructed the return of the refugees. The Indian Border Security Forces would permit refugees to enter India, but no return passage was allowed. Some refugees stated after arriving in Bangkok that the Indians had prevented their return. Some had gone to Nepal and Bhutan in order eventually to find their way back into Pakistan. The Indians had a purpose behind it. Mukti Bahini guerrillas had been trained, and with the support of Indian Artillery

and heavy mortars, they were giving a better performance. On the other hand General Yahya Khan had made no political move to solve the East Pakistan problem. As a result, world opinion was rapidly turning against Pakistan and in favour of India. Under the circumstances the presence of the refugees in India served the Indian aim of keeping the East Pakistan problem alive.

After handing over the command of the troops to Niazi, General Tikka Khan had, as the Governor, devoted his attention entirely to the rebuilding of the administration and the rehabilitation of normal life. The first priority was the distribution of food. Due to the disruption of overland communications with Chittagong, the main port of East Pakistan, the daily requirement of 5000 tons of food and other essential cargo, could only be transported by coasters which were in short supply. Before they were acquired, ad hoc arrangements were made by pressing into service all sorts of river craft. Thus the Governor's promise not to let any one die of hunger was kept.

Dacca had returned to normal in early April. This was used to set the pace for the rest of the Province. Educational institutions were opened. The attendance in the Secretariat and other Government and semi-Government agencies had soon reached 87 per cent. All the 376 Class I Officers, in the Secretariat, with the exception of three, had reported back for duty. The administration was fully established in all the districts and sub-divisions. Almost all the factories in and around Dacca had started working, although only 50 per cent of the labour had come back, and the production achieved was only 40 per cent. The East Pakistani Civil Armed Forces (EP CAF) were formed to replace the old EPR by enlisting 6,000 officers and men each from both wings of the country. Major-General M. Jamshed, an ex-Director General of the EPR, was flown from West Pakistan to command this force. It would continue to suffer from shortages of supporting weapons and signal equipment. A start had been made for the recruitment and training of Mujahids and a police force mainly from amongst the non-Bengalis, and of Razakar Forces almost entirely from amongst the Bengalis. The latter were to be deployed in the interior near their villages to defend the police stations and vulnerable targets like bridges, railways and electric installations and to provide cover to the loyal population against terrorist attacks and

create confidence amongst them. General Tikka Khan was getting a grip over the administration of the province and infusing confidence in the public by attending to their immediate requirements. The earlier apprehensions about him were being gradually dispelled. As one Russian diplomat in Karachi remarked 'Tikka Khan acted like a General at the end of March and now rules like a benign rùler'.

If by the middle of April, Government authority had been restored, by the middle of May all organised resistance had been crushed. Incidents of harassment of the population in the interior and some interference with communications by scattering anti-tank mines under the railway tracks and on the roads still continued. So did the artillery and mortar fire from across the border into Khulna, Jessore, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Comilla and Feni border areas. But rebel forces were in complete disarray and demoralised and had retreated into India. While doing so, they had destroyed lines of communications, river-craft and vehicles. What they could drive into India, they had taken away with them.

The armed forces had acted swiftly. The breakneck speed with which they operated surprised friends and foes alike. Their action deterred India from attempting any serious adventure in East Pakistan at that time. They had achieved the objectives given to them. Now it was up to the Government to produce a lasting solution to the East Pakistan problem. In the covering letter under which he had forwarded plan 'Blitz' to the Principal Staff Officer to the President, in February 1971, the then MLA and Commander, Eastern Command, had advised 'I need hardly mention that operation 'Blitz' will not and should not be an end in itself but must be followed immediately by the projection of political and economic progress at national level showing the future path to be followed as a sequel to this fire brigade action, for the wheel would then have turned full circle'.

On April 7, 1971, Dr. A.M. Malik, a highly regarded and respected East Pakistani, who was later to become the Governor of East Pakistan, wrote to General Yahya Khan: 'Let us coolly face the fact that no military action, however sophisticated, can ever keep the two wings together in peace and harmony. In spite of what happened, it is possible to continue as one nation'. At the

end of the long letter, Dr. Malik offered, among others, the following suggestions:—

a. 'Issue a white paper conceding that you are now prepared to meet Six Points and the four pre-conditions of the Awami League for attending the National Assembly. It should also give details of the Awami League's last proposal which precipitated the Government action'.

b. 'Whatever was conceded to Mujib should be implemented without delay both to prove your good faith as well as winning the confidence of the demoralised people of East Pakistan'.

He also advised the practice of Islamic Social justice and added, 'We cannot ignore the demand of majority people. A large-hearted and far-sighted approach with a touch of realism is the only way out of the impasse. The only solution of political problem, however, complicated, is through political methods'.

The President is reported to have glanced through it and initialled it. The letter was then duly filed.

CHAPTER VI

MUKTI BAHINI

BY mid-summer the rebels' resistance began to get organised. After an initial spell of terrorism, the insurgency entered into its second phase—that of guerrilla warfare. The Mukti Bahini (liberation force) gaining in strength and stature was doing its worst to keep the province in turmoil. Before proceeding any further with the story of the insurgency in East Pakistan, the reader might be interested in knowing something about this Force, which called itself the freedom fighters of Bangladesh. Its service to the Awami League and its hand in the establishment of Bangladesh is yet to be fully appreciated. Adequate information is not available on the Mukti Bahini and a fuller account has yet to come. The significant fact to note is that this force was kept in being, trained, equipped and directed by India. In Pakistan, there was a tendency to belittle it and give all the credit to the Indian Army and Border Security Force. On the other hand, the Indians, who were initially anxious to project its image by exaggerating its exploits, later became restrained. The reason for their desire to belittle it is obvious. Too much publicity to its role in the 'liberation' of Bangladesh would surely reflect on the performance of the Indian Armed Forces.

There had never been any dearth of clandestine organizations in East Pakistan during its recent history. Their existence and their unlawful activities had been known but no drastic action seemed to have been taken against them as they were perhaps considered harmless. During periods of political uncertainty and chaos, there had always been an influx of Indians from the bordering state of West Bengal. This had become marked in 1968 and 1969. During the Round Table Conference (on March 11, 1969) the then President of Pakistan, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, had pointed out to 'Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that some people had entered East Pakistan from India and guns were being sold for Rs. 40.00 per piece there.'* The same year, in December, the existence of para-military forces in East Pakistan had come to the notice of the Government. The names of some of these organizations were characteristic of the functions they were expected to perform: the pro-Russian Jangi Bahini (Militant Corps), the pro-China Mukti (Liberation) Committee; the Army for Liberation of East Bengal —a nationalist organization—and Jatio Mukti Jot (National Liberation Front)—a Communist organization. Most of the supporters of these organizations were youths particularly students. They had been brought up politically on the stories of militant forces like Viet Cong and Al Fatah and of revolutionary personalities like Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevera. Various political parties encouraged the students by using them to keep the peace at their meetings and sought their assistance in realizing political demands. This highly motivated and trained material was available and too willing to join any uprising.

The real origins of the so-called Mukti Bahini could, however, be traced not only to the first three months of 1971, when East Pakistanis were gradually getting disillusioned with their efforts to secure political power by constitutional means, but even as far back as the Agartala Conspiracy, which came to light in 1968. Various armed organizations had by then sprung up, openly providing military training. Ex-soldiers, sailors and airmen including old members of the Pakistan National Guard, Mujahids and Ansar were getting together and helping others with training and technical

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* S.M. Zafar, *Through The Crisis*, Lahore, p. 156.

advice. Arms and ammunition were pouring in from India. However, the Mukti Bahini came into existence 'officially' when, on April 11, 1971, Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed 'Prime Minister of the Bangladesh provisional government' in Calcutta announced on the radio that a 'mighty army is being formed around the nucleus of professional soldiers from the East Bengal Regiment and the East Pakistan Rifles, joined by Police, Ansar and Mujahids, and now by thousands of Awami League and other volunteers, and being trained into a fighting force.' At the same time, the formation of sectors and their responsibilities were announced. Major Khalid Musharraf, Major Zia-ur-Rahman and Major Safiullah were appointed sector commanders for Sylhet-Comilla, Chittagong-Noakhali and Mymensingh-Tangail respectively. The two zones, Kushtia-Jessore and Faridpur-Barisal-Khulna-Patuakhali became the responsibility of Major Usman and Major Jalil respectively. They were all highly trained officers, the former two having been through special training and service with commando companies of the Army. A unified command was also set up in north Bengal and a joint plan was prepared 'to mop up the remaining pockets of resistance and for a combined onslaught on Dacca.'

Later, on April 14, Colonel MAG Osmany, a retired Pakistan Army officer officially became Commander-in-Chief of the Mukti Bahini. Osmany comes from a highly respectable family of Sylhet district and was educated at the Muslim University, Aligarh. While he was a post-graduate student, World War II started and he joined the Army. He proved an extremely keen and dedicated officer. He never married and devoted most of his time and energies to the building up and promotion of the East Bengal Regiment where he was respected and accepted as 'father of the Regiment.' It is said that, while commanding a battalion of the East Bengal Regiment, he had rubbed Field Marshal Ayub Khan (then C-in-C) on the wrong side and that was one of the reasons why he never rose above the rank of Colonel. Somewhere along the line, this devoted Pakistani got disillusioned. A lesser man at the head of the Mukti Bahini would have given in much earlier. Indeed he was reported to have set an example in determination and consistency even for the Provisional Government of 'Bangladesh' in Calcutta during a

number of difficult and frustrating situations and the darkest days faced by the Bangladesh movement. Osmany's main functions were to maintain liaison with different commanders in the field.

The command structure was provided by both serving and retired East Pakistani officers of the Pakistan Armed Forces, who had defected along with their troops, or individually, from mixed units of Pakistan Army. It was soon found that their number was not sufficient for the growing strength of the Mukti Bahini. Commissions were, therefore, granted to selected students as officers after three months' training under the Indian Army's arrangements in different Indian Cantonments. According to an estimate, 600 selected students were trained in the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun.

As already stated, the nucleus was formed by battalions of the East Bengal Regiment, the East Pakistan Rifles, the Police, the Mujahids and the Ansar, who after fighting their initial battles had crossed over to India, where the Indians were ready with bases and camps for them. There was no dearth of recruits for this force. The population had already been motivated, particularly, during the election year 1970, followed by the first three crucial months of 1971. Clandestine armed organizations and students of all types came forward in large numbers and soon the Mukti Bahini became perhaps the best educated army in the subcontinent and the neighbouring countries.

India trained and equipped this force progressively and carefully. To start with it had left these functions entirely to its Border Security Forces; but when it was found that this arrangement was not meeting the requirements, the responsibility for training, equipping and employing the Mukti Bahini was given to the Indian Army. However, soon after the military action by Pakistan and the movement of the armed East Pakistani element into India, numerous training camps sprang up in the border areas of the Indian states of Bengal, Assam and Tripura. Estimates of their numbers varied from 100 to 150. The training was imparted by Indian instructors who were later supplemented with Russian specialists in selected camps. Whereas regular units of the Mukti

Bahini followed their separate programme of training, the guerrillas were trained on a set programme. For training purposes, the volunteers were divided into three groups. The first group consisted of matriculates, under-graduates and graduates in the humanities and jawans of the EBR and the EPR. They went through two months' training. The military subjects included small arms, mortars, rocket launchers and recoilless rifle training, map reading, driving and guerrilla tactics. The second group was composed of science under-graduates and graduates, and these too underwent a course of two months' training. In addition to the military subjects of the first group, they were taught electrical and mechanical engineering and dismantling and re-assembling artillery engineering and signal equipment and mine-laying. Under-matriculates, Ansar, Mujahids and other elements formed the third group. Besides the military subjects mentioned above, they were trained in tactics of destroying bridges and other installations and in handling booby traps and mines. This group received only one month's training. After this initial training the man was considered fit to take the field. If he was available for further periods, his training continued either under Indian instructors or by his own unit instructors in his outfit. Selected men were sent for advanced specialist training, for example, for artillery training to Lucknow and for signal training to Dehra Dun, after proper screening. Specially picked men went to Assam and Nagaland for commando training. Navy and Air Force personnel were trained by the Indian Naval and Air Force training establishments. People within East Pakistan were also trained by instructors provided mainly by Mukti Bahini, and their training consisted mostly of the handling of small arms and demolition charges. Independent groups, owing no allegiance to the Mukti Bahini, had their own training arrangements. For this purpose, the services of the retired personnel of the Pakistan Armed Forces and of students who had already been trained clandestinely before the military action, were utilized.

Along with this training, their indoctrination and motivation was taken up seriously, particularly after the initial failure of the infiltrators, when it was found that their first waves during June and July 1971 mostly used to desert and disperse as soon as they entered

East Pakistan. This motivation training was imparted by political advisers, who were mainly members of National and Provincial Assemblies and college and university teachers. It was designed, primarily, to subvert the trainees' loyalty to the ideology of Pakistan and promote antagonism between the local and the non-local Bengalis. In addition the political training sought to counteract whatever little propaganda Pakistan was putting across. And while it provided an ideological motive for insurgency, it also generated a militant urge to terrorise people. Selected groups of the Mukti Bahini were brain-washed by Indian psychological warfare experts; they were not allowed to come into contact with Awami League officials or political leaders. All this graudally made the Mukti Bahini a highly motivated and politicised armed force.

In order to improve the military capability of the Mukti Bahini, better arms and equipment were progressively provided by India or obtained as gifts, or bought with money donated by India, some Indian state Governments and private bodies. East Pakistanis living in foreign countries and in sympathy with the movement also donated funds. The weapons captured from the Mukti Bahini from time to time included obsolete and current Indian weapons, those originating from USSR, Israel, Belgium and Czechoslovakia, and others available in Far Eastern countries. 57 MM Recoilless Rifles of US origin and British Limpet mines for under-water sabotage were also seized from the rebels. Along with other wireless equipment, portable type transistorised equipment of Japanese origin, which is suited for commando-type operations, was also found being used by the rebels. All this equipment either came from Indian Army stores or was acquired from the Far Eastern markets through Indian help. After the Indo-Soviet Treaty, the standard of weapons and equipment improved further. From October 1971 onwards, the Mukti Bahini was using on a large scale weapons like automatic rifles, machine guns, mortars and rocket launchers, recoilless rifles, wireless sets, field telephone sets, booby traps and explosives.

When the Mukti Bahini got properly organised, it had three separate branches—the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. The army was the biggest and the best organised branch. It was

divided into two wings, corresponding to the two distinct functions that it was expected to carry out, namely, regular warfare and insurgency operations. The regular units and formations were organised on the lines of normal infantry units and brigades and trained to fight on conventional lines, similar to those of the Indian Army. Because of their Pakistan Army background, the tactics employed mainly followed those of the latter. The other was the guerrilla wing, which consisted of various squads. There was a suicide squad, whose primary function was to kill prominent workers of the Muslim League and the Jamaat-e-Islami, Razakars and Government officials. They had orders to commit suicide if necessary to avoid getting caught alive. The main function of the guerrilla squad was to destroy communication links. Then there was supposed to be a 'bichchu' (scorpion) party, which reportedly also had a female wing, consisting of young girls. They were organised and trained for sabotage, subversion and espionage work in big towns like Dacca and Chittagong. A part of this army was known as Toofan Bahini (Storm Troops). The regular units were named Swadhin Bangla Regiments as opposed to the East Bengal Regiment. The individual soldiers whether regular or guerrilla were known as freedom fighters, or F.F. for short. The Mukti Bahini was paid and sustained by India, its operations were planned and coordinated by Indians at the higher level. It had, therefore, become another arm of the Indian Armed Forces.

Besides these main organizations there were others, some owing allegiance to the Mukti Bahini command and others strictly independent. The two groups of latter type which became notorious later were the Qadir Bahini and the Mujib Bahini. The former was organised and commanded by Abdul Qadir Siddiqi, who is reported to have served in Pakistan Army ranks for a short while and had withdrawn from it to pursue his studies and was a college student when military action was taken in East Pakistan. His area of operation covered the Tangail district and parts of the Dacca and Mymensingh districts. He was perhaps, the most successful guerrilla leader thrown up by the conflict and who, later, facilitated the advance of the Indian Army towards Dacca. At the height of the operations, he commanded a force of between 16,000 and 20,000. The next group, consisting mainly of students

and commanded by some radical student leaders was known as Mujib Bahini. Its main field of operation was Dacca and the surrounding area, and it commanded a strength of about 20,000. Besides these organised and well-led groups, a mushroom of smaller bands had sprung up, as it happens in such situations. They operated locally according to their own understanding and inclinations. They did not harm the Army as such but were a menace to the local population, particularly to those known to be loyal to Pakistan and politically inclined to the right. Taking advantage of the situation, these bands were also settling their own personal scores with their opponents.

The basis of Mukti Bahini was Bengali nationalism and unlike the various liberation armies that sprang up in several countries after World War II, it did not follow any foreign ideology. Attempts had no doubt been made from the very start to induct communist groups including those of the National Awami Party (Bhashani group, pro-China) but they were not encouraged. Therefore they organised themselves independently. Professor Muzaffar Ahmed and a student leader Mr. Abdul Hakim (National Awami Party—pro-Russian) set up an independent force consisting mainly of students. Maulana Bhashani, along with Mr. Toha and Mr. Khusro, organised a youth force to keep the activities of his party alive. The main aim of this group was reported to be the elimination of the rightist elements in the Province. After the Indo-Soviet Treaty, even some highly placed persons in the Government of India tried to induce the 'Bangladesh' government to associate pro-Russian communists with their struggle. Along with others, Mr. D.P. Dhar, Chairman of the Foreign Policy Co-ordination Committee of India, and a close confidant of the Indian Prime Minister, was particularly accused by some Indian papers of pressurizing the 'Bangladesh' government for this purpose. Perhaps this pressure was a concomitant of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. Any way, the degree of success achieved by such efforts is not clear.

The nature and magnitude of the activities of the Mukti Bahini covered wide fields. Its main aim, however, was to destroy Pakistan which fitted in with the Indian plans. It set about to achieve it by crippling the economy of Pakistan and generating a climate of

chaos in the Province. It sought to dissuade the cultivators from growing jute and tea, and disrupt communications so that the produce could not reach the ports. The guerrillas looted or burnt foodgrains and damaged vital industries, installations, plants and hydro-electric works. Along with it, they concentrated on keeping the Pakistani forces permanently stretched by hindering their movement and obstructing their job of restoring law and order.

The grass-root organisation capable of sustaining a guerrilla warfare, which by its very nature is a prolonged affair, was readily provided by the Sangram Parishads. These had been organised by the Awami League earlier in the year in every village and town and were now operating undergound. Their leaders were mainly students, Awami League volunteers and other influential persons of the area in sympathy with the Awami League movement. They also motivated the public and mobilised support for the movement through meetings, leaflets and general terrorist tactics. In addition, they provided sanctuaries and rallying points for the guerrillas.

The attitude of the public had been changing progressively. The Awami League had successfully striven for long to control the population by its organization, agitational politics and strong arm pressure. Its efforts had become more pronounced during 1969, 1970 and especially during the first three months of 1971. In spite of all this the majority of the population at the start of the military action was not with the rebels. It was, in fact, with the government. Had it been otherwise, the initial success of the Armed Forces in controlling the province in a matter of a few weeks would not have been possible.

After the military action the 'Bangladesh Provisional Government' had skilfully publicised the liberation movement, alienated the people from Pakistan, and carefully built up the Mukti Bahini. It had successfully utilized terrorism as a potent and formidable weapon of warfare and an instrument for the control of the population. It set about killing people of non-Bengali origin and loyal elements amongst the Bengalis. They also sought to infiltrate their agents among the Razakars and other loyal elements. These agents induced Pakistan Army and the para-military forces

to destroy loyal citizens by false reports and accusations. Similarly some non-Bengali elements of the Pakistan para-military forces started accusing neutral or loyal elements of complicity with the Mukti Bahini. This had an extremely adverse effect on the population in general.

In addition, the population was subjected to one-sided Indian and Mukti Bahini propaganda and psychological warfare. There were no counter-measures available. The people were resentful of continued use of force by the Army, the Mukti Bahini, the Police and the Razakars. A feeling of resignation had set in. The lack of communication between the Government and the Martial Law authorities, and the intelligentsia who were sitting on the fence created a tremendous void. The people sought redress but none was available. They sought confidence and a feeling of participation in the pursuit of political reconciliation and rehabilitation, which were denied to them. A good many of the intelligentsia could see clearly that their future lay with Pakistan and were not prepared to accept Indian overlordship, but they needed to be reassured. They wanted to communicate with the common man and give him confidence; they were anxious to help in the reconstruction of East Pakistan. And for this they only needed the trust and confidence of the authorities. They wanted to be treated as equals and not as guilty persons. But authority was not prepared to respond. On the contrary, a sense of guilt was instilled in the public mind and people felt like hunted men. Gradually the population became convinced that the insurgency was only a reaction to the military operations launched on March 26. They came to believe that the cause that the armed forces were supposed to be fighting for was not a just cause. They doubted whether there ever was a plot for rebellion. However, it is significant to note that the Mukti Bahini's efforts completely failed wherever local commanders took pains on their own to keep the population with Pakistan. North Bengal, particularly Rangpur and Mymensingh when controlled by 22 Brigade were two of the many such areas.

In the meantime, the East Pakistani Police had become ineffective. West Pakistani policemen, who had given a good account of themselves earlier, were demoralised due to their inferior weapons,

weak leadership and language difficulty. They were keen to return home as they had been deputed for six months only. They were tired and frustrated, and consequently, many of them, had been guilty of insubordination and indiscipline. They were no longer capable of ensuring the security of citizens who had lost confidence in the state itself. In vast areas where army was not operating, the population felt more and more drawn to the Mukti Bahini guerrillas, and willing to seek their protection. Civilian officers were no better. The East Pakistanis amongst them had become sullen, indifferent and non-cooperative. The West Pakistanis were demoralised. Both groups kept confined to their offices.

Gradually and by stages the majority of the population was alienated from Pakistan and forced to seek Mukti Bahini protection. The attitude of the local population was ideal for the Mukti Bahini's operations. By various means it had won the unconditional support of the population which according to Mao Tes-tung 'is as essential to the combatant as water to the fish.'

The tactics and employment of the Mukti Bahini progressively changed and improved with training, expert advice and experience. Up to the beginning of May 1971, the units of the EBR, the EPR, the Police and their other armed supporters had attempted to fight on conventional lines against the loyal Pakistani Army and had been quickly dispersed. At places they, particularly the EBR, had fought with skill, courage and fanaticism—which should have surprised no one who knew these units. After initial pitched battles, some had melted away into the countryside and to inaccessible areas in the interior and close to the Indian border. A large number of them crossed over to India and were guided into camps set up for them by the Indians.

This phase was followed by a period of about two months when there were definite indications of demoralization amongst the ranks of the Mukti Bahini. Their earlier faith in the Awami League was shaken. Like some well-placed Awami League politicians, a number of the senior officers of the Mukti Bahini also made approaches through different channels to come back to Pakistan. The only assurance they sought was their personal security. Unfor-

tunately, no attempt was made to get them back or encourage their defection from India. This was the time also when a large number of desertions took place from camps in India and from amongst those who used to be infiltrated into East Pakistan from India. Most of the soldiers who deserted were old jawans of mixed units. At the first opportunity available, they used to disperse and go to their villages and their normal life. No attempt was made to capitalise on this trend, nor were such persons treated with sympathy. There was no policy of rehabilitation on which the security forces could act. On the contrary, some of these persons were chased and hunted out of their villages, leaving no option to them but to fight back and rejoin the Mukti Bahini or any other group of rebels. In some cases they banded together into small groups of their own.

In the meantime, the Indians had realised that the East Pakistan revolt had failed and that, with the quantum of direct assistance given to them so far, the rebels would not be able to liberate East Pakistan. They also noted that the Bengali population was getting reconciled to the failure of the Awami League's movement and seriously coming forward to create peaceful conditions in the Province. These unfavourable indications induced the Indians to come in, in a big way. They started assisting the Mukti Bahini command more and more in the planning of its operations and their coordination. For this purpose three Tactical Headquarters were formed by the Indian Army—at Balurghat, Cooch Behar and Agartala—with a Central Headquarters in Barrackpur near Calcutta directly under the supervision of the Indian Eastern Command. The quantum of Indian artillery and mortar fire support on the border intensified and occasional air support was also provided. Indian Army personnel were actively operating with the Mukti Bahini in carrying out raids, ambushes, disruption of communications, sabotage of vulnerable points and harassment of loyal government servants, civilians and para-military forces. As a result, Mukti Bahini operations improved considerably. But still the efficiency achieved was not enough to face the Pakistan Army. This was clearly brought out by the failure of the well-publicised monsoon campaign of the Mukti Bahini.

After the failure of this campaign, demoralization and dejection

once again set in in the rank and file of the Mukti Bahini. Defections suddenly increased. Once again the Pakistan Government failed to take advantage of the situation. The opportunity provided by the comparatively peaceful conditions in East Pakistan during August-September 1971 was allowed to slip. The Indians, however, learnt their lesson, and renewed their efforts to train and equip Mukti Bahini with greater vigour. Its training and indoctrination were made still better.

The Mukti Bahini's performance and operations improved as time passed. Along with it the Indian Army's involvement in the border battles became more pronounced and it started pushing Mukti Bahini under its artillery cover, to capture selected outposts, particularly those which had been established to seal the borders and dominate the infiltration routes. Immediately in the rear of the Pakistani positions, the Mukti Bahini agents planted mines which put considerable strain on men, transport and equipment. The countryside and the inaccessible areas were held in terror by their attacks on police stations and killing of loyal citizens. The tactics used were like those of all guerrillas. But, in addition to what the Indians and the Russians taught them, most of the guerrillas of the Mukti Bahini learnt by their own experience. Like all guerrillas, they fully exploited their knowledge of the lie of the land and the environments. They extensively and intelligently used the rivers and the channels, whereas the loyal force had neither the equipment nor the trained forces for riverine warfare, they largely succeeded in dominating the rivers and the navigational channels where Government craft could ply only if they were armed or escorted.

By November 1971, according to Indian estimates, the Bahini strength had reached a total of 100,000. Out of this 30,000 were organized into regular brigades and the remaining 70,000 in a guerrilla army. With continuous and patient Indian efforts it had become a highly motivated force and its operational skill and confidence had progressively increased.

CHAPTER VII

DEFENCE PLANS

Planning for war is a continuous process. Besides evaluating the political and international environment, planning takes into account the external threat and one's own potential. All these factors do not remain constant. They continue changing and therefore plans come under frequent scrutiny and revision. The aim to be achieved by the defence forces, is of course, specified by the government, and the armed forces evolve coordinated plans to achieve this aim. The higher defence organisation of a country, consisting of political and military institutions, should ensure that the war aim set is attainable. Once the aim is defined the higher defence organisation gears up all available resources of the country whether political, psychological or military. Therefore, the soundness of the plans and their satisfactory implementation depend on the quality of the higher defence organization. Pakistan, however, has yet to evolve a satisfactory higher defence organisation; and it has continuously suffered for the lack of it.

In Pakistan, the aim for the defence forces laid down by the Government at the time of independence was the defence of the

territorial integrity of the country; and this has been adhered to in essence all along. It had, however, been spelt out and explained differently by different Governments in accordance with the changes in the international situation and the political environment at home. The strategy all along had been that the main battles for Pakistan would be fought in the West. This was endorsed in clear terms by nearly all the governments formed at the Centre from time to time. Over the years, such thinking created the impression that India would first attack West Pakistan. There were, of course two main reasons for adopting this strategy. Firstly, the political centre of gravity of Pakistan lay in the Western Wing; and secondly, nearly all industry, the main defence installations and recruiting areas were located here. East Pakistan having been out of the path of strategic threat to the subcontinent except during World War II, had neither of them for centuries. The military potential of East Pakistan, which had started from nothing at Independence in 1947, was in a stage of gradual development.

In Pakistan, at the military level, there has never been any joint planning in the true sense of the word. At best, unilaterally produced Service plans have been coordinated through bilateral discussions between the services. The Army, the senior service, was usually the sponsor of the main plan and the plans of the other two services formed an appendage to this plan. In the absence of any joint planning staff, the aim given by the Government had been translated into military plans by the Military Operations Directorate working under the direct supervision of the Chief of the General Staff and equivalent officers in the Navy and the Air Force. As for the Army, planning had taken a turn for the better after the 1965 war when Major General (later Lieut-General) M. Yaqub Khan became the Chief of the General Staff. The old plans were analysed, corrected and brought up to date. Certain serious gaps, however, were still there—for example, what action should be taken in West Pakistan if an attack was mounted against East Pakistan?

It appears that during 1970, the mission of the Armed Forces was to defend the territorial integrity of Pakistan and in the process to destroy the maximum enemy invading forces and to caputre as

much enemy territory as possible by means of a counter offensive launched at an opportune time. On this basis, the Military Operations Directorate started systematic and methodical studies in order to revise the old plans and evolve new ones. It may be of interest to note that the Military Operations Directorate had no separate planning cell as such. The staff of the Directorate was just sufficient to deal with important day to day matters, which in themselves needed constant hard work. However, despite this, planning progressed. Overall assessment of the enemy's and own strength were carried out. Several hypotheses were considered and many plans made and discussed till a final plan emerged. Some of the officers who worked on these studies claim that they had clearly visualised the Indian intentions and the manner in which those intentions were likely to be carried out. Even the enemy's main thrust into the Shakargarh salient had been clearly foreseen. These points were duly reflected in the plan.

In August 1970, a war game lasting four days was held to test the plans. It clearly brought out that the plans were designed only to meet an Indian offensive against the Western Wing. Moreover, Pakistan did not have enough reserves to contain an Indian offensive at certain places. The army was also not balanced as it could carry out only a purely defensive role but had no offensive capability. It could no doubt launch local counter-attacks but it had insufficient reserves for a reasonable counter-offensive. This prompted the GHQ to reorganise the army but within the existing resources. As a result of war games, a reserve of the two existing Armoured Divisions and three Infantry Divisions was created. Two Independent Armoured Brigades were also formed by withdrawing integral armoured regiments from some of the existing Infantry Divisions. There were, of course, many objections from the formations concerned as they were reluctant to part with their armour. Nevertheless, this reorganisation infused a lot of confidence in the army about its holding capacity and also its ability to launch a worthwhile offensive. As the movement of the reserves into their concentration areas and their subsequent launching would require air cover, the cooperation of the PAF was sought and its Commander-in-Chief was more intimately associated with all future planning.

In August 1971, the Indian intentions of attacking East Pakistan were becoming obvious. It was realised that Pakistan might be forced to retaliate in the West against an Indian attack in the East. The plans, which had hitherto been designed only for a counter-offensive after an Indian attack in the East, were now based on the contingency that India would take the initiative and attack East Pakistan first. In order to meet this new contingency, the process of planning for an offensive from West Pakistan was started. At the end of September an initial presentation of this plan was made. Numerous conferences were held at the GHQ in which the Corps Headquarters allotted the task of launching the counter-offensive also participated. The missions of the holding Corps did not change under the new plan. They still had to carry out local actions which were being organised and rehearsed. Once the plan was finally approved regrouping of forces commenced. During this time war games at Army level with the Corps Headquarters were held, followed by similar exercises by Corps Headquarters for the divisions. After this the formations and units started their own exercises and rehearsals in order to get ready to carry out their roles.

In East Pakistan, a series of exercises in each brigade area and the Divisional Headquarters named "Titu Mir" were carried out in the winter of 1970. As a result of the lessons learnt from these exercises the final plan for the defence of East Pakistan was evolved. After its approval by the GHQ, operational instructions based on it were issued to formations by the beginning of July 1971. The aim was the same as it had been all along—the defence of East Pakistan with particular emphasis on defending Dacca at all costs. The principal hypothesis on which this plan was worked out was that the main Indian thrust would come from the direction of Balurghat/Bengaon in the West with the aim of capturing all area West of Jamuna River with secondary attacks against Sylhet, Feni and Chittagong. An enemy para-drop in Tangail area was also visualised. The scheme of manoeuvre aimed at involving the enemy by engaging him in a series of defensive battles based on strong points and obstacles arranged in depth. Starting from the East, the principal line of defence roughly followed the areas from Chittagong, Feni, Chandpur, Meghna river, Bhairab Bazaar bridge,

the old bed of the Brahmaputra, Jamalpur, Bahadurabad Ghat, Phulbari, Bogra, Natore, Rajshahi, the Madhumati river and the Pasur river. There were a second and a third line of defence behind this main position. The areas between the strong points were to be denied to the enemy as long as possible by continuous belts of obstacles, covering troops and positions in depth.

Meanwhile, in the normal process, Intelligence had produced an evaluation in mid-summer 1971, which had recommended that the situation in East Pakistan, in view of the proved Indian involvement and support to the insurrection, called for operational plans to 'seal' the borders. By then a new Chief of Staff had been posted to the Eastern Command. Whether influenced by the recommendations of the intelligence, or otherwise, a process of revising the plans was soon started. As a result, a forward posture of defence based on border outposts (BOPs) was adopted. However, while evolving its new plan, Eastern Command had made certain assumptions. The most important of these were that, by the time the Indian threat developed, the population in East Pakistan by and large would have been pacified and would no longer be hostile. Law and order would have been restored, thereby eliminating all serious problems of security in the rear. All communications—road, rail and river—would have been re-established and made reasonably secure for the movement of troops and supplies. Sufficient river craft would have been obtained to transport one brigade group at a time from one sector to another. Lastly, it was assumed that the Indian offensive would be launched only with five or six divisions. Indian Army capabilities of river and airborne operations were taken into consideration. Indian air and naval supremacy during the war in East Pakistan was accepted. It is a matter of surprise that these assumptions were not discarded even when events were proving everything to the contrary. It is equally surprising that, despite all indications to the contrary, it continued to be assumed, till the third week of November 1971, that in spite of her large concentrations along the borders, India would not embark on an invasion of East Pakistan. Instead, it was assumed that she would continue providing all kind of support, short of invasion, to the Mukti Bahini to maintain its war of attrition against

the Pakistan Army. She would use Mukti Bahini to capture a portion of East Pakistani territory in order to provide a physical base for an independent Bangladesh, which could then be recognised by India. The last assumption may seem strange when it had long been known to the Government that in case of a conflict between the two countries, India was likely to invade and occupy East Pakistan while remaining on the defensive along the Western borders and Kashmir.

The operational plan that emerged for the defence of East Pakistan was based on active defence with a number of offensive actions to take the war into enemy territory. The maximum use of raids, ambushes and spoiling attacks were planned. As in all the previous plans since Independence, the defence of Dacca was to be ensured at all costs, but it seems that this emphasis was somehow lost sight of in the process of the subsequent modification of plans, as well as during the conduct of operations.

As stated earlier, the positions were based on a forward defensive posture. Under this concept, a ring of security on the borders was provided so that pacification of the population could take place and power handed over to the Bengalis in December 1971, as General Yahya Khan had announced earlier. The border outposts were to be backed by strong points and defences as far forward as was tactically sound on all major land approaches from India into East Pakistan. These defences were to be stocked with supplies and ammunition varying from 7 to 15 days with 15 to 30 days reserves held in the rear areas. If and when the forward defences became untenable, units and sub-units were to withdraw to communication centres like the towns of Jessore, Khulna, Jhenida, Bogra, Comilla, Luksham and Chittagong and convert them into strong points. Whilst gaps between strong points were to be surveilled, positions were prepared in rear to facilitate counter-attacks. It will be noticed that this concept of defence was based more on achieving the political aim of not allowing territory to fall into Indian hands for the purpose of establishing a rebel government and was, perhaps also influenced by Intelligence, which had recommended sealing the borders. The surprising part is that although Intelligence changed its assessment on this issue later, the COS,

Army and the Eastern Command never did so. This plan was also approved by the Chief of Staff, Army after it had been presented to him during his visit to East Pakistan in the middle of August 1971.

Particularly since the end of 1965, Pakistan had never been in a position to go to war with its big neighbour. Whereas its traditional sources of arms and heavy equipment had dried up, India had not only created new and reliable ones but also had increased its manufacturing capabilities of a large range of heavy weapons and sophisticated equipment. With the almost daily expansion of the Indian Armed Forces since the 1965 war, it had become economically impossible for Pakistan to keep pace with her. The policy of matching Indian strength with even 1/3 or 1/4 in numbers had gradually gone overboard. Under these circumstances all that Pakistan could do was to avoid war with India and to strive to resolve her disputes through political and diplomatic means. Should these efforts not prove successful and war became inevitable then perhaps an active and aggressive policy would have been more prudent. Opportunities for the latter were provided by India on various occasions, but at the opportune moments the President hesitated and let the chance slip out of his hands. Thus the initiative remained with India all along and she was allowed to act at will.

It was, therefore, clear that initiative for starting hostilities would lie with India. The international situation was also changing fast in favour of India. The massive support in sophisticated weapons, selected operators and advisers that Russia gave to India was not visualised at the time of planning, nor was the outright diplomatic backing given by Russia to India. Chinese physical intervention in case of hostilities was never expected. The best that could be expected was that the normal deployment of Chinese forces on the Indo-China borders would prevent India from thinning out its forces from those areas in order to use them against Pakistan.

As explained earlier, by the end of August 1971, it had become obvious that India was determined to invade East Pakistan. However noble may have been the intentions of the Pakistani leaders and their wishful thinking about avoiding a war, India was not

prepared to miss the 'opportunity of centuries'. There was no option left for Pakistan but to plan for the contingency of India launching an offensive in East Pakistan while adopting an aggressive defensive posture against West Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. The task under these circumstances was clear—to launch a counter-offensive into Indian territory from West Pakistan. It appeared only logical that in the event of an Indian attack on East Pakistan, the Army would seize the initiative in West Pakistan immediately at the start of hostilities and launch an offensive with a view to capturing maximum possible Indian territory of strategic and political significance. At the same time, the Army was to deny similar territory in Pakistan to India. This was the mission, to achieve which the planners worked day and night, and they succeeded in producing a very good plan indeed.

The plan, it appears, revolved around a counter-offensive to be launched by a Corps with an armoured division and two infantry divisions. After its initial attack, if need be, this force was to be reinforced with more infantry and armour as a result of regrouping. The remainder of the army was to perform mainly a holding role. In other words, it had to keep the enemy fixed all along the western front in order to disrupt and disorganise his capabilities for any offensive. However, in order to further enhance the success of the offensive, a few measures were planned to induce the enemy to divert his forces, particularly the reserves, from the general area of the selected objectives of the offensive. One measure was to carry out a number of local attacks in addition to improving the defensive posture all along the front of the holding formations. Another was to adopt elaborate deception measures under an overall army cover plan designed to give the impression that the strike forces were assembled for a different task than the one planned.

There appears to have been heated discussions on the timing of launching the counter-offensive. One school of thought, presumably led by the Chief of the General Staff, believed that the reaction to an Indian invasion of East Pakistan must start with an all-out offensive by the strike Corps, but it seems that he did not persist sufficiently in getting his viewpoint accepted. The second school maintained that holding formations must first carry out preliminary operations to fix the enemy and to divert his attention

to these operations in order to facilitate the subsequent launching of the offensive. The plan approved was the latter one, consisting of preliminary operations followed by counter-offensive.

Briefly, the task allotted to formations for the preliminary operations was as follows. The 12 Infantry Division in Kashmir, consisting mainly of Azad Kashmir Forces, was to capture the Poonch area and to simulate local and limited offensive in order to fix enemy reserves in Jammu and Kashmir and to prevent them from going south of the river Chenab. The temporarily reinforced 23 Infantry Division in Gujrat area was to immediately secure the line of river Tawi and, as part of the deception plan, simulate an offensive for the capture of area Naushahra-Rajauri. I Corps was to eliminate the Dharm enclave, an Indian pocket on the Pakistan side of the river Ravi near Narowal, and simulate an offensive in the area in order to draw enemy forces into the Shakargarh salient. This was considered important. General Abdul Hamid Khan, the Chief of Staff, had emphasised this fact in different words at different times by saying that he was prepared to allow the enemy to occupy all areas up to Bumbanwala-Ravi-Bedian (BRB) canal in order to let the counter-offensive of the strike Corps go through. At the planning stage he was prepared to take the maximum risk to ensure the success of the counter-offensive. IV Corps in area Lahore and Kasur-Sulaimanki was allotted the task of clearing Indian enclaves in its area and to close upto the Changanwan drain between the river Ravi and the Grand Trunk Road and also to improve its defensive posture by undertaking local attacks in other areas. In addition, it had to simulate attacks and threaten communications with a view to tying down enemy reserves in the area.

The 18 Infantry Division, which was responsible for a 560-miles front from Rahimyar Khan to the Rann of Kutch, including Karachi, was given the task of defending the area east of the Indus River. In the overall plan, the mission of the division was purely defensive by virtue of the paucity of resources compared to its task. It seems, however, that at a later stage the Army Chief of Staff, on a visit to the formation, somewhat peremptorily and without due process of staff study, conceived the idea of an offensive mission for this division as well. What purpose was to be achieved by

this offensive is not clear. If the idea was to keep the Indian forces in that area fixed, this could have been done by other methods. In any case, the time and space factors would not have enabled the Indian troops deployed in this area being withdrawn in time to influence the battles in the plains of Punjab. In the event, this decision turned out to be an unfortunate one, as the division, with a brigade detached as it was to look after the Khokrapar-Umarkot approach, was not equal to the allotted task of capturing Ramgarh, 40 miles deep in enemy territory, leave alone aspiring to capture Jaisalmer, another 40 miles away.

The plan produced by the General Staff, on the whole, was a good plan by any standard of judgement. It was most creditable for the planners that in face of Indian superiority, they had been able to muster so much reserve. The plan itself was bold, simple and easy to implement. There was also a tinge of gamble in it, but all this suited the Pakistani character. General Yahya Khan called it a unique plan. The officers who knew the plan were most enthusiastic about it and were certain that it would succeed if launched on time and as a whole.

CHAPTER VIII

INSURGENCY II

THE revolt in East Pakistan had been completely crushed by the end of May. The rebels had been scattered and had moved into the sanctuary of India. Besides a few small pockets along the borders in the east and the north, the whole of East Pakistan territory was clear of them. From the reports, it was clear that the rebels had become disheartened, demoralised and disillusioned. The cohesiveness of command and control they had shown earlier was no longer visible. In the month of June, except for sporadic acts of sabotage and minor guerrilla activity by the Indian infiltrators and the few rebels left behind who had recovered their breath, there was no other organised rebel activity.

The Muslim population, particularly in the rural areas, had welcomed the troops and were coming forward in large numbers to help them. They assisted in providing intelligence about the rebels, carrying equipment and ammunition during the cross-country moves and in repairing damaged roads and bridges to help communications. The law and order situation in East Pakistan had returned as near to normalcy as could be expected under the circumstances. The Government machinery had been re-established and

industrial and economic life had begun to be revived. Throughout the Province, the population had regained confidence. The swift and successful operations of the Armed Forces had prepared the ground for the condition that the President had laid down for the restoration of democracy in his broadcast speech on March 26, 1971. 'My aim remains the same, namely, transfer of power to elected representatives of the people. As the situation permits, I will take fresh steps towards the achievement of the objective.' The loyal people of East Pakistan and the armed forces now believed that the time had come for a fresh initiative by President. In fact, the period from April 15 to June 30, 1971 was the most conducive to some sort of a political solution.

As far as the Armed Forces were concerned, till the end of May 1971, there was a purpose behind the operations—the establishment of Government authority. After that a political solution should have followed, but unfortunately it was not forthcoming. Therefore, from June onwards there was no purpose in a military action and the futility of the fight was becoming obvious. The use of force without the backing of political and diplomatic action was achieving nothing. East and West Pakistan could not be kept together by force alone. If there was any misunderstanding that Bengali nationalism was still confined to a minority of extremists, it should have been cleared by the happenings of the preceding few months. The President and his close advisers had not given any serious thought to the lessons of guerrilla warfare or insurrections. The two successful actions after World War II were in Malaya and the Philippines. In both countries the tables were turned only through enlightened methods which combined military toughness with political and social progress. The President had placed himself in an extremely difficult political situation. After having declared Mujibur Rahman a traitor and having dispersed the Awami League high command, he could not easily fill the vacuum. Whatever the difficulties he had to move fast to produce a political solution. India had openly sided with the rebels. So, the real problem now was not the rebellion but the Indian intervention. However, the urgency of the situation seemed to escape the President. Later, he did make a half-hearted attempt to recreate the central authority in the Province but only with rejected people, and that too when it was too late.

The Eastern Command had only planned to restore the Government authority in the Province. It had neither the strength nor the

equipment or logistical support, nor the training, for a long drawn out guerrilla warfare. It had planned to deploy a limited strength of infantry, in platoon strengths, on border outposts of strategic importance to deny the entry of the rebels into East Pakistan. The remainder of the Army was to be withdrawn and concentrated in their cantonments before monsoon set in. This proved an illusion, as evidence started trickling about India's hectic preparations for a major guerrilla activity in East Pakistan.

After a lull of over a month, the Mukti Bahini suddenly started getting active, on all fronts. When the rebels struck at the beginning of July 1971, they were better trained and operated under a coordinated plan. There was a cohesive command with clear and well understood objectives. This was the long awaited Mukti Bahini Monsoon Offensive. India's hand in planning, preparations and launching of this attack was quite obvious. Company and battalion size attacks fully supported by Indian Artillery and Mortars were carried out. However, generally, the tactics followed at most places were not to come to grips with the defending troops but to resort to cont'nuous firing from a distance in order to attract fire from Pakistani troops. The aim of the Mukti Bahini seemed to be to exhaust the Pakistani supplies of ammunition. It was a war of attrition. Along with this a large number of rebels were infiltrated into the interior. They concentrated on attacking far away police stations, killing loyal citizens, blowing off bridges and culverts, transformers, power stations, electric pylons and gas stations. Mines were laid on the roads and under railway tracks, and some out-of-the way railway stations were attacked. Ships were also attacked in Chittagong and Chalna harbours by trained frogmen. They were daring attacks. At Chalna, in three consecutive attacks on alternative nights between September 18 and 22, frogmen armed with limpet mines damaged or destroyed ss Lightening, ss Teviot Baick, ss AC Murtaza, ss Imitaz Bakhsh, oil tanker Sibtadinga, one barge and two flats. Attempts were made to damage coasters, jetties and ferries, and jute godowns. Barges were set on fire, blocking the export of jute. The enemy also succeeded in damaging some tea factories south of Sylhet and frightened and scared away most of the labour working in the tea gardens. News was circulated to put the blame for this, as for every other destructive activity, on the Pakistan Army. An observer from Sylhet, however reported otherwise: 'Responsibility for wide-

spread destruction in the factories of the famous tea gardens in the Sylhet area of East Pakistan and the desertion of the skilled Hindu staff, is laid fairly and squarely on the Indian Government by those few British planters who remain....They complained of continual harassment from across the Indian border by mortar bombs, rifle fire and at times shelling by 25 pounders....This was in addition to the damage caused by Bangladesh guerrillas who, the planters claimed, were being given active help on the spot by Indian Army Sappers.'*

There was also a concentration of rebel activity around Dacca. Some police stations were seized temporarily, and in Dacca itself an explosion was generated inside the Inter-Continental Hotel. In some cases, there was physical interference in the running of schools, colleges and universities and the holding of examinations.

The Mukti Bahini agents were active in the interior with whatever methods they could employ to harm the soldiers. For example there was a case of poisoning. At Mymensingh, these agents had observed the Mess Havildar of an officers' mess making his daily purchases of fruits from a particular shop. They came a night before and injected poison in the bananas which were sold to the Mess Havildar. Fortunately for the officers, the bananas were not consumed for twenty four hours, and they started turning black which aroused suspicion. They were tested and the plot was revealed.

Along with the other activities, psychological warfare was started through broadcasts from India, whispering campaigns and pamphlets. Rumours were spread to frighten the population, letters were addressed by name to loyal citizens, political leaders who had opposed Awami League, civil servants, Union Council Chairmen and members of Peace Committees and Razakar leaders, branding them as collaborators and threatening them and their families' lives.

These activities gathered momentum and continued increasing as time passed. In addition to tying down Pakistani troops on the border, they succeeded in creating confusion in the interior

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*The *Daily Telegraph*, London, June 28, 1971, News Report by Clare Hollingworth in Sylhet.

and terrorising and subduing the loyal population. By October 1971, the Mukti Bahini had built up a horrifying record of sabotage, murder and kidnapping. The following major sabotage actions had been recorded. The figures are only approximate and based on reliable estimates:—

a.	Number of explosions in public and private places	..	497
b.	Government offices and godowns attacked	..	188
c.	Police stations attacked	..	283
d.	Bridges damaged or destroyed	..	231
e.	Railway lines damaged or destroyed	..	122
f.	Electric installations damaged or destroyed	..	90
g.	Banks and Treasuries looted	..	19

In addition, the rebels had killed, injured and kidnapped about 250 Peace Committee Members. The correct number of civilians who were dubbed as collaborators including the families of Razakars killed and injured will perhaps never be known. The estimates vary from 3000 to 5000 and do not include the massive killings of non-Bengalis before the Army restored the law and order situation. The Indian figures as published in their press are much more than those given here.

In the meantime, HQ CMLA seems to have directed the Eastern Command not to allow the rebels to capture any chunk of territory. There was the danger, perhaps, of India, at once, recognising it as a Bangladesh state. The Indian example could be followed by a few other countries openly supporting India. This view was also confirmed by the new harassment tactics of the rebels on the border outposts, and definite attempts to capture some of them.

How this policy of not allowing a chunk of East Pakistan territory to fall into the hands of the rebels, was allowed to be continued, is difficult to understand. Nor can its aim and scope be clear in the absence of any direct evidence. As far as it can be ascertained no written directive was issued on the subject by either the HQ CMLA or the GHQ. After the military action, it was essential that the Province must be cleared of the rebels. The pockets of areas held on the border by them should be reoccupied and they

must be prevented from recapturing even any small areas there. General Yahya Khan had implied it in his broadcast and press conferences. The President had also later warned India that if she made any encroachment in East Pakistan, it would amount to open war. However, with the rising threat of the Indian invasion, no shift in this policy was ever attempted. No emphasis was given to the deployment of the troops to fight an Indian invasion. The main lines of the defence plan of East Pakistan were gradually obliterated by the regular use of this policy. Everyone, and there were luckily many senior officers in the GHQ and the Eastern Command who argued against this concept, received the same reply that the President had said that not one inch of territory would be lost. Almost every soldier had been told accordingly. The sensitiveness of the HQ CMLA and the high command to any encroachment made Lieut-General Niazi more careful and rigid on the point. It seems that gradually it became a highly personal involvement for Niazi. He himself made many promises to hold every inch of land. In due course, he became obsessed with the thought that even a tactical withdrawal would be treated as his personal failure and a stigma upon his honour as a soldier. Under the circumstances, adoption of an aggressive posture on the borders, and a resolve not to let any violation of the border go unpunished, became the order of the day. In order to carry out this role, formations and units soon got dispersed in vast areas and in small penny packets on the borders.

Soon after the large scale infiltration of rebels the performance of the local police in maintaining law and order in some areas in the interior was found unsatisfactory. In certain *thanas* they were leaving their posts without putting up any resistance and were suspected of collaboration with the rebels. Attempts were made to use troops in such areas where the law and order situation had deteriorated. However, the troops found it difficult to get hold of the miscreants as they would vanish or merge with the people who would not disclose their identity or whereabouts due to fear of repression later.

Consequently some new measures were adopted to augment the security forces. The East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EP CAF) had already been raised on the lines of EPR by recruiting half the strength in East Pakistan and the other half from West Pakistan. A contingent of police was also imported from West

Pakistan. Still, the strength available could not meet the requirements. In order, therefore, to make up for the deficiency left in the police and the EP CAF, a massive drive was launched to recruit a Razakar (volunteers) force mainly of Bengalis. They were trained by the Army for ten days, equipped with old 303 rifles and deployed in the interior near their villages. Their function was to defend police stations, vulnerable targets like bridges, railways and electric installations, and provide the loyal population with a deterrent force against terrorists' attacks. Gradual recruitment of Razakars had already started earlier, but the Government sanction for raising them arrived only at the end of August. Future events proved that, if this force had been raised earlier, it would have achieved a satisfactory degree of training and, armed with better weapons, would have done extremely well. Anyway, its performance was most commendable. Nuclei of an Industrial Security Force and a Vital Point Force were also raised. These local voluntary forces suffered from two drawbacks. First, they were poorly armed, having only old rifles. Secondly, they had virtually no command structure. They were mainly deployed under the control of the police and the Army.

The raising, arming and deployment of such a large number of locals had a visible effect on the law and order situation and a reassuring effect on the local population. Guerrilla activities and sabotage acts showed a decreasing trend during August, September and early October, despite the daily increasing infiltration from across the border. These local forces, and particularly the Razakars, on the whole fought well and took heavy casualties. As a result, the infiltrators changed their tactics against them. From September onwards, their efforts were generally concentrated on demoralising and subverting the Razakar Force. Better armed guerrilla bands of 100 or 200 would attack solitary detachments of about 20 Razakars and overwhelm them. Rebels and disloyal elements were infiltrated into this force in order to destory its morale from within. Families of many Razakars were identified and their members executed. Those who sponsored their recruitment were threatened and even killed. Inducement through monetary awards, leaflets and radio propaganda highlighting their inferiority in weapons and equipment and the futility of their operations, accompanied with terror, were some of the tactics used to demoralise and subvert this force. In spite of all these threats, their performance continued to improve.

The locally raised and poorly armed para-military forces were under the constant onslaught of psychological warfare and ruthless terrorist activities, which affected them and their families. They were receiving no word of appreciation from the public or the Government. Notwithstanding all this, their work, particularly that of the Razakars, was indeed praiseworthy. Even at the height of the Indian invasion, when the Razakars could see everything being demolished around them and the locals generally deserting the cause, their hard core stood firm and did not falter in their old loyalties. After the fall of Dacca they paid the highest price for their loyalty and perished in cold blood at the hands of their own compatriots; their deeds of valour have remained unsung and unapplauded.

In August, General Tikka Khan who had by sheer ceaseless hard work achieved considerable success in pacifying the province and had thereby acquired popularity and acceptability, was transferred and replaced as Governor by Dr. A.M. Malik, a distinguished East Pakistani leader. Some East Pakistani leaders had, however, approached the President with the request that Tikka Khan should be left to continue in his post. If it was essential to install a civilian governor, Tikka Khan should be appointed Commander, Eastern Command. The President, however, did not accede to their request. Therefore the functions of the Martial Law Administrator devolved upon Lieut-General A.A.K. Niazi. Due care does not seem to have been taken in the selection of Commander, Eastern Command. Niazi's was an unfortunate choice as he did not have the calibre, and the shortcoming was known throughout the Army. He was not cut for the most responsible, ticklish and delicate independent command in the Army. He was not a man of crisis, who could utilize to advantage, the freedom provided to him by the environment of minimum supervision. He did not understand the real nature of the complex problem of East Pakistan at that time. The situation in East Pakistan was not studied in its historical, political, sociological and economic perspectives. As a result, he over-simplified his work. His mind worked on simple company and platoon actions and border outposts concept of operations. Most of the officers who served under him are unanimous in the view that, as a commander, he did not inspire by his intellect, command qualities or character. Once the on-the-spot supervision and guidance of the military governor had been removed, his failings started becoming pronounced and public.

According to the general concept of the operation, in order to secure the borders by occupying border outposts, the bulk of the army got deployed on the borders. Rebel concentrations in the interior were dealt with by reserve detachments of troops. The appreciation seemed to have been that if their infiltration was minimized, and the rebels who did so continued to be eliminated by military action inside the Province, a stage would arrive when no more would be willing to infiltrate. In case of an Indian attack, defence would be conducted from strong points. The three weak divisions at the disposal of the Eastern Command were not sufficient to implement this policy of holding about 1400 miles of open border with India which had not been demarcated on strategic and tactical considerations, and was based on administrative facilities only. With the increased pressure of the Indian Army, the temptation of trying to be strong everywhere overwhelmed the Eastern Command. The elementary strategic principle that trying to be strong everywhere results in weakness all over, was overlooked. Gradually the EP CAF and the West Pakistan Rangers, which could be made available for border defence and even the troops in reserve were all consumed. The desire to plug holes all over the borders also forced the Eastern Command to break all principles of organisation and to sacrifice the efficiency of command and control. Every little intrusion on borders by rebels was taken as a serious matter and was normally attacked without reasonable preparations, resulting in heavy casualties and frequent failures. Units and sub-units got sub-divided into small detachments of composite group of Army, EP CAF, Ranger, Police and even Razakars. Supporting arms faced the same fate. There were instances of single guns and individual tanks supporting small detachments far away from their parent units or sub-units. Gradually, the Eastern Command's attention got diverted from its military aim. The infiltrators and their routes of entry were getting on the nerves of the Command. By and by the Command was defying its own instructions. Some of the later actions seemed to show as if the command was living on a day-to-day basis. They also showed as if there was neither an overall concept of operations and plans to deal with the situation, nor a well considered strategy or tactics to do so.

The initial operational plan, as mentioned earlier, was evolved keeping certain assumptions in view. With the fast changing situation, those assumptions no longer held good. But these assumptions, once made, were never altered. No evaluation of the intelli-

gence later available, or of the changed conditions, seems to have been carried out. Therefore, no revised plans were ever issued. This meant that the formations and units were operating on plans no longer feasible. Again, instead of the original plan being followed, the political requirements were becoming supreme. Consequently, the military requirement got lost or was sacrificed. Niazi, who started off fighting two wars initially needing different types of handling, soon came down to fighting only one which was of least importance in the given circumstances.

The confusion of priorities was further confounded by the conflicting orders given to the Eastern Command by the HQ CMLA and the GHQ. There seemed to be no clear-cut procedures of duties and functioning of the two in relation to the Eastern Command. Orders emanating from the HQ CMLA, though mainly confined to the achieving of political aims, at times infringed on purely technical military affairs. This was part of the type of ML Government in power, where the President in addition to his duties as such was also C-in-C Army and Supreme Commander of Armed Forces, and his headquarters as Chief Martial Law Administrator were staffed with Army Officers. The orders issued by him, or the instructions given direct to the Commander, Eastern Command on the telephone, or by signals, might have been known to the Chief of Staff, Army, but were seldom conveyed to the staff at the GHQ. Although there were clear Operational Instructions issued by the GHQ in case of an attack by India, it was never ensured that they were being complied with. Instead, by stages the Eastern Command was being made responsible for everything. As the civilian administration grew weak and sullen in face of the growing activities of the rebels and in the absence of any motivation, the army got further drawn into extra-military affairs. Officers of all ranks got over-burdened with multifarious duties. For example, even a junior officer like a company or equivalent commander was commanding, besides his regular unit, detachment of Mujahids, police and Razakars equipped with four different types of rifles, and training them too. In addition, he was looking after the civil administration and Martial Law duties entrusted to him. The problem facing the troops in East Pakistan had become too big for the Eastern Command.

The high command should have taken note of it. But it either did not understand the problem or failed to face the realities

in the hope that they would somehow sort themselves out. The high command had its own excuses too. General Niazi had personalised the command to the extreme. The reporting of military matters was reserved and coloured. The account of operations and events reported to the GHQ by Eastern Command remained rosy and optimistic. There was a definite attempt at keeping the higher headquarters in the dark and feeding it with such information as the commander thought fit. Even if the casualties in a day's action were considered large, they were distributed over the reports for next few days. So much so, that when the Chief of Staff, Army visited East Pakistan in October 1971, elaborate preparations were made and repeated rehearsals carried out for his briefing at the Eastern Command Headquarters. Scripts were prepared and generally all the unpalatable parts were deleted. All this, however, could not have escaped the trained eye of the Chief of Staff.

It is reported that the Chief of the General Staff used to remark on the reports received from Eastern Command that they were exaggerated and advised his subordinates not to take any action on them. However, no steps seem to have been taken to correct the trend. Niazi was advised by some of his officers to bring the correct position to the notice of the high command but he must have thought that it would reflect on his own position if he told the truth. Even when all his reserves were committed, he still lacked the courage to advise the GHQ of the facts and his command's weaknesses. However, it is hard to believe that the high command did not know the real state of affairs obtaining in East Pakistan. After all they were not dependent only on the Eastern Command for information. The senior officers from GHQ paid visits, albeit infrequently and must have reported their impressions. There were intelligence agencies and other sources feeding the high command with information. Anyhow, when the high command awoke to the realities, it was too late.

During September, there was comparative calm all over East Pakistan and the Province seemed to be getting under control. The indications were that the well-advertised Monsoon Offensive of the Mukti Bahini had failed. There were reports of mutinies taking place in the rebel camps in India, and the Mukti Bahini was said to be absoltuely at a low ebb, and at the point of giving up. But again no political advantage of the situation was taken. The

three things that kept the Mukti Bahini going were, firstly the Eastern Command's insistence on taking seriously even its minor actions, which resulted in reprisals, secondly, absence of any political initiative to accept and restore the Bahini members to civil life, and lastly the stepping up of the Indian help. At this stage, India decided to come in, in a big way.

By this time, too, it was realised that a large number of heterogeneous units of the EP CAF, the Rangers, the Frontier Corps, the Mujahids and the Razakars dispersed over a vast area and holding a large frontage, would surely collapse if effective control was not exercised over them. In order to improve their utility, it was decided to strengthen the command and control structure of these elements, and a large number of *ad hoc* headquarters were raised during the months of October and November. Fortunately a number of officers were available, who had been posted to East Pakistan to strengthen the civil administration during July and August. Besides, some lower headquarters, a divisional headquarters (36 *ad hoc* Division) and six Brigade Headquarters were raised in October and Headquarters 39 *ad hoc* Division and another Brigade Heaquarters were formed just before the Indian invasion started on November 21. These headquarters were really *ad hoc* and might present a misleading picture. They were deficient in trained staff, communications and transport. The only advantage that they brought was that some coordination and control of operation could be done by the commanders by frequent personal visits. Additionally, units could also look to the Headquarters for advice and guidance.

During October and November the Indian Army became very active all along the borders. The positions manned by Pakistani troops came under well-planned and determined combined attacks by the rebels, the Indian Border Security Forces and the Indian Army. These attacks consisted mainly of border violations and desperate attempts by the enemy to capture some salient and important tactical ground. The Indians made an effort to escalate border violations and, along with the rebels, to draw and contain Pakistani troops on the border, thus leaving the interior free for the rebels' operations in the countryside. The pattern followed by India for these combined attacks during October and November seemed to be to provide fire support and troops to capture territory and hand it over to the rebels. In addition, she provided fire support in case of any counter-attacks by Pakistani troops.

Some of the fiercest actions took place as follows. Early in October, after having shelled BOPs at Bhurangamari and Goibari in Rangpur district, the Indian troops and the BSF attacked the Goibari BOP manned by the EP CAF, who withdrew. The Indians advanced two miles inside Pakistan territory and attacked the Bhurangamari BOP twice but failed to capture it. 25 Punjab arrived on the scene and succeeded in recapturing some of the lost ground. After intermittent shelling the BOPs in the Chhatak-Sunamganj area, in Sylhet district, the Indians had succeeded in infiltrating rebels in strength in the rear by October 13. They had damaged tea and cement factories at Chhatak and the Gas Pipe Line in Sunamganj before they were cleared out of the area with the arrival of reinforcements. The Dhalai position in the same sector was similarly subjected to repeated shelling during October, and attacked on October 31. The attack, which was led by old 4 EBR rebels assisted by 2 Jat Battalion of Indian Army, was repulsed. A second attack was launched by the enemy after establishing a blocking position in the rear. After a hand-to-hand fighting, and after having inflicted and suffered heavy casualties, including three officers, the remnants of the Company of 33 FF withdrew to other positions about 4000 yards behind. Any further action in this area was suspended owing to paucity of troops. On October 23, a combined attack of the Indians and the Mukti Bahini with full support of artillery was launched in Kasba position in Comilla district. Pakistani troops which consisted of a section of regular troops and a platoon of EP CAF had to withdraw to the main defensive position in the rear. The enemy's repeated attacks from October 23 to 25 were repulsed. Pakistani troops counter-attacked to regain the lost ground but had to abandon further action after having suffered heavy casualties. The Mandabagh-Saldanadi area had been constantly shelled by the Indians during September-October and the intensity of bombardment had increased from October 15, onwards. By October 18, a rebel battalion had managed to infiltrate and occupy well dug-in positions in the rear of the Pakistani positions. 33 Baluch, with the help of air support, had to attack repeatedly to dislodge the rebels from the area, and succeeded in doing so by October 25. The rebels suffered very heavy casualties and fled back to India. In the same district the Pakistani BOP at Akapara, which was held by a platoon each of Razakars and Rangers and a section of regular troops, was subjected to intense shelling followed by attacks on November 3 by nearly 2000 rebels and Indian troops. After repulsing a couple of

attacks, the Pakistanis had to withdraw. With the immediate arrival of reinforcements, Akapara was reoccupied. The attacks had been increasing in intensity and strength and the biggest of them came in the Belonia salient in Chittagong district on the night of November 7. An Indian regular battalion and a battalion of rebels intruded from the east and the west into the Belonia salient, cut its northern portion and occupied all area north of Fulgazi. The next night the enemy succeeded in eliminating the Parashuram and Belonia BOPs. Further enemy advance was checked with the arrival of fresh reinforcements.

. Along with the attacks on the borders, the intensity of which was increasing daily, attacks by the guerrillas in the interior were stepped up. Raids and ambushes on small bodies of troops became common. In order to hold positions on the borders and to deal with guerrilla activity in the rear, division and brigades had to group and regroup battalions, companies and even platoons and sections with the support of single guns and mortars to plug gaps and reinforce threats. This resulted in dispersion and loss of cohesion, particularly in the infantry, artillery and mortar regiments. By getting on to the borders, the troops were getting fixed and losing their manoeuvrability and initiative. They were confined to one dimension and could only operate frontally. They lost all freedom of striking from any other direction.

As if this was not enough, the Eastern Command took up clearing operations against some rebel concentration in the interior. The following major operations were conducted. The first and most important one was Charland Operation. The aim was to clear both sides of Brahmaputra River from Nagalbari Ghat to Phulchari Ghat. It was a combined operation involving 34 Brigade supported by 29 Cavalry, Naval Gun Boats and PAF. After a few postponements, it was launched in early November. It only went up to the line of Tangail and then its tempo died down. The second was the Tangail-Mirzapur operation with the aim of clearing rebels from this area. Troops from the 36 *ad hoc* Division deployed here for the purpose had only a partial success. Similarly, the Narsingdi area in the vicinity of Dacca was partially cleared by 53 Brigade at about the same time. Lastly, an operation was launched on November 17 in Dacca city to seek out the rebels after imposing a curfew. Only a little success was achieved. This created further dispersion of effort and by this time virtually

all reserves had been committed past extraction. Without sector reserves, the plan of fighting from strong points completely collapsed. In case of an Indian invasion, even if the troops could manage to fall back on so-called strong points they would become besieged garrisons. They could therefore either be destroyed in detail or bypassed at will in the absence of reserves who were to keep surveillance in the gaps between them.

Since early October, the worsening situation in East Pakistan had not escaped any visitor from the West. Officers returning from the East looked perturbed and were reporting their impressions to their superiors. The Chief of Staff, Army, was advised by different officers at the same time to order the Eastern Command to fall back on their defences and get ready to implement the operational plan. No action seems to have been taken. The COS, Army, never issued any orders to this effect.

The Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) visited East Pakistan during the second week of October, and noted the deployment of troops in penny packets. He discussed the problems with COS, Eastern Command, and advised him to concentrate the troops in battle positions in order to avoid defeat in detail. On his return on October 12 he informed the CGS that the BOP concept of defence, as currently being followed by the Eastern Command, should be abandoned and troops deployed according to defence plans if there were any. Old plans had outlived their usefulness as they were based on assumptions which were no longer applicable. The CGS took DMI, along with Director of Military Operations (DMO), to the COS, Army. After explaining the situation, it was recommended to him that it was high time that positive directions were issued to the Eastern Command to get ready to fight tactical battles. The initial reaction of the COS was that the decision should be left to the man on the spot. 'Let him fight his battles the way he deems fit,' he said. Early in November, on the return of Vice Chief of the General Staff (VCGS) from East Pakistan where he had also gone through the same experience as had DMI, renewed pressure was exerted on the COS, Army to issue directions to the Eastern Command to change their stance. When pressed further, the COS decided to send the DMO over to East Pakistan. When the DMO raised the question, 'With what instructions;' the COS gave no answer and the idea was dropped. Instead as a last resort it was agreed to summon the COS, Eastern Command, for

discussions. Lieut-General Niazi detailed Major General Jamshed, Commander, 36 *ad hoc* Division, to accompany his Chief of Staff. The conference took place at GHQ on November 10. Besides the COS, Army, CGS, QMG, VCGS, DMO and DMI were present. The C-in-C Navy, who happened to be visiting the GHQ, also dropped in for some time. The COS, Eastern Command presented the plans which took two days including discussion. He explained in detail and justified the Border Outposts concept of defence and assured the COS, Army that, in case of the Indian invasion the Eastern Command had plans to fall back, if need be, on strong points in the rear at tactical points. When it was pointed out to him that the EP CAF, the Mujahids and the Razakars had been raised so that the BOPs would be handed over to them and the Army withdrawn to their concentration areas, the COS, Eastern Command replied that para-military forces were not ready to take over, and anyhow they could not operate without the backing of the Army. When the discussion had reached that stage, the telephone rang. The President had called the COS Army, who at once left the conference; whereupon the conference packed up without achieving anything positive and without any decision.

While this discussion was going on, the time for the withdrawal of troops from forward positions on the borders and their concentration in battle positions was fast running out. The troops were heavily committed in the battles on the borders. The strategic and tactical mobility of the Eastern Command had been reduced to the minimum due to extensive guerrilla activities in the rear and sabotage of numerous road bridges, ferries, river-craft and ships, which were the sole means of transport for shifting troops and logistics from one place to another and from one geographical compartment to another across river obstacles.

The refusal to give any fresh guidance to Eastern Command at that critical moment could only mean that the COS, Army and the President were quite satisfied with the deployment and operations of troops in East Pakistan. However, on the demand of the Eastern Command team for a fresh division, three infantry battalions, 15 Punjab, 12 Punjab and 20 Azad Kashmir (AK), were ordered to move to East Pakistan again without any heavy weapons or equipment.

After the inconclusive conference, the DMI took Major General Jamshed to MI Operation Room, and with the help of maps, briefed

him on the latest known Indian deployment along the East Pakistan borders. He entreated that the situation being extremely dangerous 'Let us not destroy ourselves by distributing our troops in penny packets.' Jamshed, a brave soldier, became reflective and remarked that if it was so, the Eastern Command should be issued with operation instructions or a directive to that effect.

The two officers from East Pakistan had earlier asked to spend Eid holidays on November 20 and 21 with their families before returning. They were, however, hurriedly directed to return to their posts as reliable information had been received on November 14 about the Indian intention of launching a full-fledged attack on East Pakistan on Eid day, November 20. People in certain places on the West Pakistan borders, particularly of Sind seemed to know about it. As a result trade and other commercial activity in those areas had come to a standstill. Still the Eastern Command was not given any instructions to get back to their defences and forget the political aim of denying any chunk of territory to the enemy. Nor, in the face of this danger, did the Eastern Command seek to fall back on their battle positions. Some of its officers believed that if they had been ordered to fall back to defend Dacca even on November 22, at least a division and a half would have taken position within the area behind the rivers Padma, Brahmaputra and Meghna. However, the Commander, Eastern Command need not have waited to be told to take the action which he considered correct. The responsibility of the security of his command and the best utilization of his formations for the defence of the Province was entirely his. No General can vindicate his position by claiming that he was not ordered to follow a specified course or was compelled to follow a certain order against his better judgement.

On the eve of the Indian invasion, the troops in East Pakistan were placed in a position of such immense disadvantage as no army of that size had ever been placed in. The few Pakistani divisions in East Pakistan were without their normal heavy weapons and had been fighting for about eight months a purposeless war in an unfamiliar, hostile environment. They were deployed as paramilitary forces, without any clear aim or definite instructions. Their operational communications had been almost destroyed and they were cut off from their base in West Pakistan.

CHAPTER IX

INDIAN PREPARATIONS

IN a short chapter it is not possible to discuss in detail the long preparations patiently made by India to achieve its objectives. Only glimpses can be given of their moves to prepare their people and the nations of the world for the ultimate action that Indians had in mind all along. Many lessons can be learnt from a study of how carefully and consistently India built her forces and how she prepared the people politically, and the steps she took to compel the world powers to fall in line with her thinking. In Pakistan those who are now responsible for governing the country and those who aspire to do so in the future will be well rewarded by detailed analysis of it.

The important points in the Indian preparations which deserve our special notice here are as follows. First, the Indian aim, which was to dismember Pakistan, whatever her spokesmen and friends may say to the contrary. It was clear, unambiguous and understood by all those responsible for achieving it at the political, diplomatic or military level. Secondly, the long range and patient planning in all the three fields—political, diplomatic and military to achieve the aim laid down and the total mobilisation of national effort towards

that end, including a well-thought-out psychological campaign. Thirdly, the singlemindedness and consistency with which the achievement of this aim was pursued, and finally, the first class co-ordination of political. diplomatic and military moves and their timings.

There may have been momentary set-backs which obliged India to change its tactics and even change its stance on occasions, but the aim was neither changed nor lost sight off. For some time all the efforts by India in the political and diplomatic fields, failed to bear the desired fruit. No advantage was taken by Pakistan of this failure. On the contrary General Yahya Khan and his Government provided fresh grounds to the Indian Prime Minister. She persisted in her efforts and took full advantage of those mistakes. She succeeded through Yahya Khan's blunders.

India had always shown a keen interest in the events in East Pakistan. More recently she had helped the Awami League covertly with propaganda and money during the long election campaign in 1970. It had vehemently pleaded its case during the early months of 1971. when the calling of the National Assembly by General Yahya Khan was being delayed. It had, by various means, overt and covert, encouraged the Awami League to adopt a hard and inflexible political line. It is now clear that one of the purposes of the political hijacking of an Indian Fokker Friendship by a few Kashmiri youths on January 30, 1971, which had been engineered by the Indian Intelligence, was to help the secessionist elements in East Pakistan. Moreover, India had provided arms and ammunition on a large scale to the dissident elements within East Pakistan. In fact, she had done everything in her power to create chaos and disorder in the political life of the Province. Soon after the military action, aimed at restoring Government authority in the Province, the Indian Prime Minister had herself moved a resolution in the two Houses of the Indian Parliament which left no doubt about India's intentions in relation to East Pakistan. It assured the people of the Province that 'their struggle and sacrifice will receive the wholehearted sympathy and support of the people of India.' It also pleaded for immediate cessation of the use of force and the 'massacre of the defenceless people of East Bengal.' This resolution was passed unanimously and, surprisingly, without any discussion by the Parliament. This was followd, on April 4, 1971 by a similar resolution of the All-India Congress Committee pledging all-out support

to the people of Bangladesh. At the same meeting, the Foreign Minister of India had revealed that 'every man, woman and child in India—from Kashmir to Kerala, from Rajasthan to Assam—was involved in the struggle of their brethren and neighbours in East Bengal'. As for the recognition of the Provisional Government of Bangladesh, which had already been allowed to be formed on Indian soil, the Prime Minister, although under great pressure, declined to do so and gently advised patience, but at the same time she helped in building up a mood of sympathy with the people of East Pakistan. In addition, she encouraged fund collection and all other activities to assist the cause of the dissident elements in East Pakistan. *De facto* recognition was, however, allowed in practice, and all the facilities and formalities required for such acceptance were afforded to the rebel government formed in India. Mr. Bijay Sing Nahar, Deputy Chief Minister of West Bengal, was voicing the general feeling when he declared that 'we in West Bengal recognise Bangladesh although the Central Government has not done so yet'.* This lent further support to the already well conducted propaganda in favour of East Pakistan and against West Pakistan, and helped to prepare the Indian public for a possible conflict with Pakistan. Indeed, there could be no more effective means of unifying the people of India than a well-sold war against Pakistan. The Indian radio and press got the clue and started publicising imaginary accounts about the successes of the Mukti Bahini and the dismal rout of Pakistan Army and its sorry plight. Highly coloured and moving accounts of the plight of the people in East Pakistan were published and broadcast in order to arouse the passions of the Indian public and to intensify the hatred against West Pakistan. Regretfully, in the absence of any worthwhile publicity by Pakistan, some foreign newspapers and radio stations picked up these accounts and gave these stories worldwide publicity at the expense of Pakistan. At the same time, seminars and discussions to create sympathy for East Pakistan and hatred against West Pakistan became suddenly popular in India. Even the Universities became involved in this propaganda exercise. In addition, discussions on the pros and cons of disintegrating Pakistan became common. These were made popular by Mr. K. Subramaniyam, the Director of the Indian Institute of Defence Studies, who, in a speech before the Indian Council of World Affairs in Delhi

* The *Economist* London, 24 April 1971 as quoted in *Pakistan Horizon*, page 26, Vol. XXIV, No. 2.

about the end of March 1971, pleaded vehemently that the breakup of Pakistan was in India's interest and that the opportunity that offered them might never come again. He explained that the developments in East Pakistan provided India with an unprecedented opportunity to dismember Pakistan.[1] Economically, politically and otherwise, Pakistan had never been in a weaker position against India, and the nation was not fully united. A few days later, he dispelled any doubts by maintaining in a statement that 'The so-called international norms of conduct have never deterred any major power from taking action to protect its interests....a bold initiative on our part to help the struggle in Bangladesh to end quickly and victoriously, is therefore, called for.'[2] The eagerness of the Indians to take advantage of the situation and derive geopolitical advantage by dismembering Pakistan was becoming obvious.

However, by the end of April 1971, it had become clear to India that, in spite of all its help, the rebellion in East Pakistan had failed. About 150,000 armed and trained rebels supported by Indian Army infiltrators and Indian Border Security Forces, who were by all counts expected to destroy approximately 12,000 loyal Pakistani troops opposing them, had been scattered and driven to sanctuaries provided by India. Her radio and press at this stage abruptly started playing down the activities of the rebels and vehemently took over the cause of the refugees and turned it into a political issue. The return and rehabilitation of refugees was used as a ground for a crusade of compassion. In such conditions, no self-respecting Indian could remain a dove. The accounts of the refugees and their plight and sufferings became the dominant note. On May 24, 1971, the Prime Minister of India, in a speech in the Parliament accused the world Powers of 'dragging their feet in reacting to the situation in East Pakistan' and warned them, 'If the world does not take heed, we shall be constrained to take all such measures as may be necessary.' This was the voice of weakness. India had been disappointed by the outcome of the rebellion which it had so assiduously planned and encouraged and by the performance of the rebels. The mood of gloom that prevailed in Delhi during May and early June was also confirmed by neutral observers of the scene in India. However, no advantage of the situation was taken by the Pakistan Government to initiate a political solution for East Pakistan. In the prevailing apathy of Pakistan's rulers and their failure to grasp the

1. The *Hindustan Times*, April 1, 1971.
2. The *National Herald*, Delhi, April 6, 1971.

situation fully, it was not long before the Indians regained the initiative and quickly overcame the prevailing gloom and despondency.

The political campaign to create sympathy for East Pakistan was renewed with greater earnestness. The ground was prepared to build up popular support for a war with Pakistan in case world opinion and a better-trained Mukti Bahini failed to achieve the Indian aim of breaking up Pakistan. Mr. Jaya Prakash Narayan, while addressing the two-day Bihar State Conference on Bangladesh on July 6, stressed the need for India going to war with Pakistan to solve the Bangldesh problem. He said: 'The country, the Government and the people are unworthy, if they are not prepared for a war.' He added that 'defeat of Bangladesh would be the defeat of India'.[1] While India was getting ready, creation of chaos and disorder in East Pakistan could be continued by an all-out support to the insurgents, and India could stand by and watch 'her main enemy eliminate itself as a threat to her power through internal conflict.'[2]

From the day the military action started in East Pakistan, India had made clear by word and deed that she was not prepared to allow the revolt to die down. The situation being built up in India clearly showed that it would be most unwise to think that India would let slip an opportunity 'The like of which will never come again,' as Mr. K. Subramaniyam had worded it. General Yahya Khan may rightly be given the credit that he was genuine in his desire of not wanting a war with India. The rulers of India, however, would not allow the prevelance of a peaceful atmosphere in East Pakistan. Whereas India persisted in calling for the return of the refugees—her main bone of contention—she closed all the routes of their return. Even the UN efforts to return them to their homes were successfully countered. The return of refugees would have left no excuse for India to destroy Pakistan. The Indian Defence Minister, while addressing a public meeting at Bahula in West Bengal, spelled out the Indian intention. 'The evacuees, he said will be sent back to Bangladesh and not to Pakistan.[3] The Indian Prime Minister declared 'we have no intention of allowing them (refugees from East Pakistan) to settle here.' She, however, could not ask them to go back as she had 'responsibilities towards friends (refugees)

1. The *Hindustan Times*, July 7, 1971.
2. The *New Statesman*, London, July 2, 1971.
3. The *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, June 3, 1971.

from across the border.'* India was naturally very touchy about any one reminding her of interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. The Prime Minister of India dismissed this charge by counter-accusing Pakistan. 'This is an insult to the aspirations and spontaneous sacrifices of the people of Bangladesh and a calculated attempt by the rulers of Pakistan to make India a scapegoat for their own misdeeds. It is also a crude attempt to deceive the world community.'

This well-directed campaign to create the desired public opinion soon started paying dividends. The belligerent mood in India started sharpening. Talk of war and a break-up of Pakistan was becoming common. Experts were convincing the people that a blitzkrieg against Pakistan would be cheaper than millions of permanent refugees. In brief, war hysteria was let loose in India. All opinion—forming organs and almost all the public leaders spoke with one voice about the inevitability of war with Pakistan. *The Weekly Organiser*, Delhi, summed up the Indian mood by declaring on October 2, 1971 'Pakistan has to be got rid of at any sacrifice.' The Defence Minister of India, as reported in the press on October 30, used all his authority to assure people in Jullunder that they would go as far as Lahore and Sialkot, and keep them too. The humanitarian cause of the refugees, and sympathy for Bangladesh, had outlived their usefulness and were left behind.

Almost simultaneously with the political campaign within the country, a well-planned diplomatic campaign was set afoot by India. Continuous maligning of Pakistan and belittling of its international stature in the eyes of the world had always been the most important aim of Indian foreign policy. It was greatly helped by India's larger size and resources, her relative stability, and maturer methods. Pakistan's internal dissensions, and persistent failure to evolve a stable political system, and her complacent muddling through from one crisis to another, helped the Indian diplomats to drive their point home to foreign governments and publics. The ground had thus already been prepared for India's efforts in relation to Bangladesh, and the arguments of her diplomats now fell on receptive ears in almost all the important and powerful chancelleries of the world.

Indians present in foreign countries provided considerable help in their country's diplomatic campaign against Pakistan.

*The *Hindu*, June 16, 1971.

Indians in England spared no efforts in maligning Pakistan until they succeeded in creating a hatred for her amongst the British public and the ripples of this wave travelled across Europe. How the BBC news in Hindi and the '*Jahan Numa*' programme became almost Bharat Broadcasting Corporation remains a mystery but reflects a great credit on the Indian political and diplomatic effort.

As an essential step in all such diplomatic moves, India had to first establish her *locus standi* in the situation prevailing in East Pakistan. The issue readily available was that of refugees. The number of refugees was grossly exaggerated and India identified herself with their resettlement in East Pakistan. Other issues like the restoration of democracy in Pakistan and political instability on India's eastern flank were connected with it. But, it was mainly with the humanitarian issue that India unleashed its diplomatic campaign against Pakistan.

Literature and background material was issued through Embassies and sympathetic book agencies and private citizens. A heavily subsidised publicity campaign was carried on through certain sections of the foreign press, TV and radio. Highly coloured and exaggerated accounts and stories of events in East Pakistan were 'planted' through some foreign correspondents. The Prime Minister of India 'wrote to several Heads of State and Government implicitly seeking diplomatic intervention for a speedy political settlement of the Bangladesh issue'.[1] Prominent and internationally known Indians were despatched to various countries to put over the Indian case. For example, Mr. Jaya Parkash Narayan, was perhaps the first who went out in May 1971 to visit 46 countries. These visits were followed by official tours of European and Southeast Asian countries by half a dozen ministers of the Government, including the Foreign Minister. The aim of these visits, was explained by the Prime Minister while winding up a four-day debate in the Rajya Sabha (upper House of Indian Parliament): 'Putting the world powers in the dock for their apathy towards the East Bengal development, Prime Minister IndiraGandhi today warned them that they would not be allowed to shirk their responsibility for the consequences of what happens in this part of the world. It was to educate world opinion on this question that some Ministers and non-officials had gone abroad'.[2] The message conveyed to different countries

1. The *Hindustan Times*, May 26, 1971.
2. The *Hindustan Times*, June 16, 1971.

by these emissaries was that, unless they prevailed upon Pakistan to see reason, India would have no alternative but to do it herself', as she was anxious to safeguard her interests. In other words, it meant that other countries must put pressure on Pakistan to disintegrate itself or India would do it by force of arms. The world was therefore notified of the intentions of India. In the Lok Sabha debate on June 23, the Indian Foreign Minister expressed the Government's satisfaction by saying, 'India has not left any country in doubt about its idea for a political solution of the Bangladesh problem.'

In the meantime, on Indian initiative, negotiations were secretly going on for a treaty with Russia. When the work on the agreement had reached its final stage, the Chairman of the Foreign Policy Coordinating Committee of the Indian Cabinet, Mr. D.P. Dhar, flew over to Moscow. In return,the Soviet Foreign Minister arrived in Delhi in early August 1971 and the Indo-Soviet Treaty was signed and Indo-Soviet collaboration already well advanced, was put into high gear. It created a commotion in the world but brought great relief and satisfaction to India. The Indians were jubilant as their government had been able to 'do a Kissinger' on Islamabad and Washington, as one of the Indian magazines phrased it.* This was a hint at Mr. Kissinger's secret visit to China via Pakistan which had become the starting point for the normalization of Sino-US relations. By her Russian treaty, India had taken care of her Chinese flank and ensured for herself massive supplies of sophisticated weapons and technical advice and help from Russia.

The stage was now set for the last effort to wean the countries which really mattered in the world to India's point of view in order to clear the decks for a final blow at Pakistan. The Prime Minister herself set about paying visits to foreign countries. After all Pakistan—an independent sovereign country—could not be broken to pieces so easily. It needed all the pains that India and her Prime Minister were taking. In the middle of August she paid a visit to Russia. Besides pleading with Russian authorities the urgency of providing additional sophisticated military hardware to India, she also extracted a promise of help from Soviet leaders for any action India might take to tackle the situation in Bangladesh. This was made clear in the communique issued after the visit.

* The *Link Indian News Magazine*, August 15, 1971.

Between October 16 and November 12 the Indian Prime Minister toured several West European countries and the USA. She visited France, West Germany, the UK, Belgium and Austria where she sought support for India's case in the name of democracy. She mainly pleaded for aid for the refugees who, according to her, were a tremendous burden on India. She asked them to pressurise Pakistan for a political settlement in East Pakistan. During this tour she showed her willingness to meet Yahya Khan to discuss the problems of two countries but maintained that the qeustion of East Pakistan was for the people of Pakistan to decide. At Paris, while repeating her offer to meet Yahya Khan, she said 'but you know his position, how can you shake hands with a clenched fist'* She assured everyone that India could never assign to herself the role of an aggressor, it was Pakistan who was involving India and saddling her with problems by provocation. She also contended that the Indo-Soviet treaty did not in any way compromise India's neutrality. India seemed to have succeeded in winning sympathy and neutralising support to Pakistan. By making political capital out of the exodus of refugees, which she had herself engineered and exaggerating their numbers to the astronomical figure of 10 million, India first managed to internationalise the problem and then turned it into an excuse to dismember a neighbouring country by presenting it as a just war of liberation for a humanitarian cause.

These political and diplomatic moves were accompanied by military preparations. The political direction to the armed forces was clear and unambiguous and the aim given was to dismember Pakistan. It now began to materialise in massive troop movements to the borders of East Pakistan where the Indian Army normally used to maintain one division. Initial troop movements were made in February 1971, ostensibly to cover the Indian elections, when one additional Infantry Division, elements of two Mountain Divisions and one Para Brigade were inducted into West Bengal. Four Border Security Forces (BSF) battalions were also air-lifted during the same period from Rajasthan, raising the total of such battalions to 30. The peacetime manpower of about 12,000 facing East Pakistan thus shot up to 90,000. This was not the end. More troops were gradually deployed around East Pakistan and the speed of their concentration increased after the military action in East Pakistan. At the same time, Indian troops in certain parts of the borders, for

* The *Dawn*, Karachi, November 4, 1971.

example, the Batarpur and Agartala areas, were moved very close the international boundary.

Besides occasional artillery and mortar fire into Pakistan territory the Indian Army on the whole continued to maintain a low profile till about August 1971. India's intentions, however, vere getting clearer. Its moves during that period were only the imple mentation of the first stage of what was to follow later.

Some time during the later part of 1970, India had scrap her traditional military strategy of considering of the Punjab as the decisive battle ground against Pakistan. Instead, she adopted the basic strategy of a decisive action in the eastern theatre—East Pakistan, while adopting an overall defensive posture in the West till operations in East Pakistan had successfully concluded. By July 1971, according to Indian accounts the Indian Service Chiefs had been given a clearcut directive of planning and preparing for war with Pakistan. Their existing plans had to be revised according to the new strategy. In the context of an overall strategic aim, the main endeavour of India was to blunt Pakistani reaction from the Western Wing, where the latter's main military strength lay and from where the Pakistani Armed Forces were expected to react violently to any Indian attack on East Pakistan. In order to counteract this contingency, Indian planners identified all areas of interest to Pakistan in the West and held them in strength. A number of such areas, particularly the Shakargarh bulge, jutting too closely to vital Indian communications into Jammu, were selected for pre-emptive strikes against them. Reserves were also located at suitable places to react to any Pakistani breakthrough. In addition, opportunities had to be sought to improve local defensive positions particularly in Northern Kashmir where Pakistani positions were threateningly close to the Indian road to Ladakh. By the beginning of October the Indian Army and the Air Force were fully deployed in their battle positions and poised to implement the plan.

The aim of the Indian strategy against East Pakistan was to entice Pakistani forces to the borders, divide them into units and subunits in order to prevent them from fighting concentrated and stop them from falling back on Dacca where they could unite for its defence. Dacca occupied a strong strategic position between the three mighty rivers the Padma, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna—with a number of smaller distributaries of the rivers in depth.

The involvement of India in East Pakistan was clearly in five phases. In the initial stages of the rebellion, she had actively helped the rebels with four regular battalions and ten BSF battalions to check the advance of the Pakistan Army to the borders. Two Indian Army Engineers were decorated for blowing up bridges near Feni on the road to Chittagong. Next, the Indians had taken over the training, equipment and direction of the rebel operations. These two early phases seem to have been planned as the need arose. During this period the Indians had obviously pinned great hopes on the capability of the rebels either to destroy the small garrison of loyal troops or at least hold large tracts of East Pakistan without any considerable involvement of the Indian Armed Forces. However this was not to be.

The plan that now emerged, and became clear only during its implementation, was in three phases. It fitted in with the pattern of previous Indian involvement and that which could logically follow. Phase one aimed at further activating the Pakistani borders in order to entice the Pakistani troops there. This was done by the Mukti Bahini guerrillas supported by the Indian Army and the Indian Border Security Forces. Phase two, which could be termed as the preparatory stage for a final assault, had the dual aim of enticing whatever Pakistani reserves were left in the interior and clearing launching sites for the Indian forces earmarked for the main assault. During these two phases the Indians were assisted by Pakistan's continued insistence on the policy of denying every inch of territory to rebels. The last phase covered the grand design of a massive assault from all around East Pakistan with three Army Corps and overwhelming superiority in the air. The thrust from the east was to be the more powerful as the strategic objective, Dacca, was nearest from this side and the capture of the Bhairab Bazar bridge over the river Meghna cut off Sylhet and Chittagong from the remainder of Province. It also afforded better chances of surprise due to the known paucity of communications in the Indian State of Tripura, the launching area for Indian troops. The Indians had undertaken vast improvements of roads, tracks and construction of air strips in this area, before the invasion. While the army supported from the air went into action from three landward sides of East Pakistan, the Indian Navy was to have a go from the south, the seaward-side of the Province. All this preponderance of Indian might, amounting to 'using a sledge hammer to kill a fly' was perhaps essential to

demonstrate Indian superiority and to build the morale of her forces.

The invasion of East Pakistan was to take place in the dry months of the year, possibly in November or December when all the important Himyalayan passes get snow-bound and the Chinese interference is minimised. However, any threat from China does not seem to have been the major factor in the choice of time. The Chinese had already been immobilized by the Indo-Soviet Treaty and the guarantees given by Russia. The degree of training to be achieved by the Mukti Bahini and the suitable attrition of Pakistani forces played their part in this choice. The main reason, however, seemed to have been that Indian preponderance of armed forces could be used to effect only during the dry weather. There could have been no other time but the dry months of East Pakistan when the victory could have been made to look spectacular. This time also coordinated well with the build-up of the political and diplomatic campaign.

One is tempted to compare the Indian invasion plan of East Pakistan with that of Hitler's onslaught on Poland in 1939. The problem faced by the Indian planners was similar in some ways. The long frontiers of East Pakistan with India were almost of the same extent as the borders of Poland with Germany after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the latter. The way the Pakistani divisions were deployed along the borders was the same as that of the Polish Army, although for different reasons. Whereas the Pakistan Army was there in penny packets to stop the incursions of the rebels into the Province, and had to be enticed there by Indian and Mukti Bahini attacks, the Polish Army had concentrated along the border to cover the industrial areas of the country which were situated close to the borders. The advantages of the strategic front inherent in about 1700 miles of the frontier all around East Pakistan were to be exploited to the maximum. Supremacy in the air was to be used by India as ruthlessly as the Germans had done. The greater role in attack was given to the Indian Corps operating from the east, as the Germans had done to the army group advancing from the south and south west. India, like Germany, was also in a hurry to complete the campaign. However, India had some additional advantages, which she utilized to the maximum. She controlled the seaward borders of East Pakistan and used its Navy and the Carrier borne aircraft to support ground forces. Unlike the German forces, which were numerically not much

bigger than the Polish forces, the Indian armed forces were overwhelmingly superior in numbers and weapons to Pakistan's just over three lightly armed and tired divisions, which had been fighting counter insurgency operations for about eight months.

The first phase of the plan seems to have commenced in August 1971. Selected border outposts on East Pakistan were constantly shelled, and the BSF, the Indian Army and the rebels started attacking all weak spots on a limited scale. This coincided with the second phase of the Indian Army build-up against East Pakistan. During this phase three Army Corps consisting of eight divisions with four Armoured regiments had been deployed along the East Pakistan borders by September 20. The escalation, which had been increased in intensity on the borders by early October, turned out to be the most serious and provocative phase of the Indian involvement so far. Indian regular troops, and rebels supported by long-range artillery and tanks, attacked Pakistani positions with the aim of capturing some of the strategic areas along the border. The rebels fought under Indian command, as part of the Indian Army. India had trained and armed them and was paying them.

While directing its Service Chiefs to prepare for war with Pakistan, the Indian Government had given a free hand to them to meet the additional requirements of manpower, equipment and ammunition. The raising of new headquarters and other establishments considered essential for the revised plans was also allowed. Enough funds were made available for the import of sophisticated equipment and of such equipment as would have further increased the mobility and fighting capacity of the armed forces. This was all done on a lavish scale. The important measures taken to improve the combat potential were as follows. Recruitment of men had been completed, releases and discharges from the armed forces had been stopped, and the reservists recalled. Territorial army units were embodied and all military institutions and the courses of instructions carried out there, were put on a war footing. Large scale imports of sophisticated equipment had been taken in hand to further tilt the balance of military power in favour of India. Very soon, the stocking of war stores in the forward areas had been completed and deficiencies of critical items made up. Along with all this, improvement and development of roads in the Tripura State of India, from where the major Indian thrust was to be launched had been taken in hand. After the Indo-

Soviet Treaty, Russia started supplying all that India wanted. After the visit of the Soviet delegation, headed by the Deputy Foreign Minister, to Delhi at the end of October, the Soviet Chief of Air Staff, with a team of experts went to India. The Soviet commitment was then firmed up and the great airlift of equipment had started along-with supplies by sea. This was only to supplement the supplies which Russia had been giving for a long time.

At the beginning of October, the Indian Prime Minister had wrested whatever little initiative Yahya Khan still had. The world opinion had been conditioned to accept Indian aggression as legitimate. India's war plans were ready and its Armed Forces had concentrated in battle positions around East Pakistan. The Mukti Bahini had been trained, the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan was reaching the last stages of battle fatigue after long-drawn-out and futile operations. Above all, the Indo-Soviet Treaty had been concluded and gone into the implementation stage. Indian diplomacy, the world opinion and their own ineptitude had left the rulers of Pakistan with no option but defeat. When, in his address to the nation on October 12, Yayha Khan complained of India's attempts at disintegrating Pakistan, the bellicose statements of Indian leaders and the concentration of Indian troops on Pakistan's borders—he was correct. India had found an ally in Russia, developed a belligerent mood, and felt that she could do whatever she liked. However, when Yahya Khan maintained in the same speech that Pakistan was not alone, he was deluding himself and his countrymen. He was overplaying his China card. China had been neutralised and could give only diplomatic support. As one Chinese diplomat remarked in answer to a question from a Pakistani about the possibility of active Chinese aid to Pakistan, 'You know Russia is not afraid of China.'

It was reported later that the Indian Prime Minister had already decided to invade East Pakistan before her visit to European countries in October 1971. But her continued insistence on a political solution of the East Pakistan crisis, and her advice that there could be no military solution to the problem had raised hopes that she would avoid going to war with Pakistan. Later, General Abdul Hamid Khan, the Chief of Staff Army is reported to have contended that the high command had also arrived at the same conclusion. Such gullibility can hardly be excused in the case of military officers in such

close contact with the politico-military situation. On the other hand, by November 1971, the well-planned Indian threat, both covert and overt, had succeeded and paid the desired dividends. The fighting on the borders had taken the shape of a protracted war which suited India as much as it damaged Pakistan economically and militarily. Pakistan could not have long borne the continuous attrition of its forces on the East Pakistan borders. This war of attrition, alongwith the enlarged scale of the infiltrators' activities in the interior of the Province was systematically weakening the Pakistani forces and the economic life of the Province. All these activities were sure to thwart the holding of new elections. India was, therefore, achieving its aim without plunging itself into a full-scale invasion. Why did India take this step then? Notwithstanding the Soviet underwriting of all the actions that she might decide to take in East Pakistan, and the military and diplomatic cover provided by Moscow, she could have easily waited for Pakistan to call a halt itself. The understandable reasons for India's action are two: Firstly, the Indian Prime Minister, after having met the US President early in November, when the latter had informed her of his efforts to bring about a political solution in East Pakistan, must have comprehended the dangers to her plans if a political solution came about. She understood the realities of the situation in East Pakistan more clearly than President Nixon or Yahya Khan. She must have hurried home to launch her forces, which were already deployed in their battle position. President Nixon's discussions with Mrs Gandhi in Washington were followed, on November 19, by a message to New Delhi, through the U.S. Ambassador, that Yahya Khan had agreed to autonomy and civil rule in East Pakistan by December. Secondly, in any political or other solution without a full-fleged war, the real victors would have been the people of East Pakistan and not India. Understandably, India was not prepared to be relegated to the background and deny herself an opportunity of defeating the Pakistani forces in East Pakistan, which were not in a position to put up any serious resistance. It seems that the time for invasion was, therefore, advanced to November 21, instead of some later date.

CHAPTER X

STATE OF ARMY—NOVEMBER 1971

IT will be worthwhile to look at the state of the army in November 1971, the eve of the Indian invasion of East Pakistan. Pakistan had fought the war in 1965 with seven infantry divisions; two armoured divisions, one of which was in fact only a brigade group; one anti-aircraft brigade, and ten to fourteen battalions of Azad Kashmir forces. During the war and the immediate post-war period two battalions each were added to all infantry divisions to complete their strength. Hitherto, they had only seven battalions due to financial stringency. In addition, one new infantry division, two independent infantry brigades and one engineer brigade were raised. Another Corps Headquarters was also added. In numbers, all this had amounted to inducting about 40,000 troops, mostly from the ex-soldier population of the country.

After the Tashkent Agreement in February 1966, it was decided to demobilize part of the army. However, during the studies to fix its peacetime strength, it was revealed that the existing strength had become grossly insufficient in view of the large scale expansion in the Indian Army. Following the policy of maintaining 1/3 to 1/4

of the Indian strength as a good deterrent against India, the quantum of the army had been increased by another three infantry divisions by the beginning of 1968. This continued to be the strength of the army up to the middle of 1971. The only reorganization carried out during this period seemed to be that of command and control. Besides some minor changes, one additional Corps Headquarters and Headquarters Eastern Command were raised, and old Line of Communication Areas were converted into Logistics Areas, mainly a change in name. Further expansion came in July 1971, when two new infantry divisions were raised to replace those which had to be flown to East Pakistan in April 1971, just after the start of the military action there.

In length of service and measure of experience and training, the army was not even half as effective as in 1965. Since March 1969, it had only been able to train hardly up to unit level and no further. From whatever figures are available, it can be surmised that 75 per cent of the officers and Junior Commissioned Officers had only from six months to five years of service and a large number of freshly commissioned officers were still being inducted. The case of other ranks was worse. 66 per cent of them had only been in service for about 1 to 4 years and 20 per cent even less than six months. A large number of units were raised only during October and November 1971. The effect of the new inductions during 1971 was borne entirely by the troops in West Pakistan as all reinforce ments, whether officers or other ranks, going to East Pakistan consis ted of trained soldiers and no units or formations in East Pakistan could be milked for new raisings throughout 1971.

Although, units and formations were almost complete numberwise, except of course for the officers—their shortage being about 30 per cent—they were not armed and equipped satisfactorily. The principal deficiencies were in heavy weapons and communication equipment. The main source of weapons and equipment before 1965 was the United States of America which had dried up long time back. In fact it would be correct to say that the USA had not provided any arms and equipment since the war in 1965. And since then it had become even more difficult to purchase spare parts of the existing arms and equipment. America was getting very sensitive to the Indian diplomatic pressure, the adverse propaganda and the critical statements of the powerful Indian lobby in Washington. As a

result she disallowed even the sale of spares to Pakistan. Arms and equipment were therefore obtained mainly from China. In spite of all possible efforts there were still a great many critical shortages in November 1971. According to a reliable estimate, in terms of money, the important shortages amounted to about 500 crore (5 billion) rupees. This had created a dangerous qualitative and quantitative disparity vis-a-vis India. India, on the other hand, had been building up its armed forces feverishly since 1965 and had acquired substantial quantities of better weapons and equipment from all possible sources namely, Russia, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, France and also Israel. This was in addition to the great strides it had made in manufacturing even sophisticated material within the country. Furthermore, she had wisely built up immense storage capacity for stock-piling. By contrast, Pakistan had no facilities for manufacture within the country, except for small arms and various types of ammunition up to the field gun range and simple equipment; it had perforce to purchase and procure arms and equipment from different countries. Consequently the standardization of arms and equipment within the army was adversely affected. For example, even the small arms used by army were mainly of four different types. They were the M-1 group of US origin, Chinese small arms, the 303 group, being the old obsolete arms of the army, and the new G-3 or 7.62 Calibre weapons. The variety of weapons produced numerous logistic problems.

However, the most serious problem that faced the army was the dissatisfaction of its East Pakistani element and its defection to India. It was only about 20 per cent of the total strength of the army, but its defection at a critical moment had an extremely serious effect on the army's efficiency. Some of the East Pakistani officers were senior enough to have access to the operational secrets which they duly passed on to the Indians. The East Pakistanis serving in their own province had revolted and gone over to India. After the rebellion, the high command was under constant pressure to disarm East Pakistani troops in West Pakistan and remove Bengali officers from sensitive appointments. The dilemma with which the high command was faced was perhaps unprecedented in its complexity. However, no action was taken; on the contrary a "business-as-usual" atmosphere was maintained and a number of Bengali officers were promoted and given important appointments. Bengalis, therefore, remained a part of the army in West Pakistan till the very end. The Pakistan Army had to regret this during the war and certain

units had to be disarmed either because they tried to defect or because their sub-units had already defected. Individual or small group desertions had taken place between April and November 1971, but no policy was ever spelt out regarding the East Pakistani soldiers. A number of complaints, and suggestions for a clear-cut policy, were put up by various formations and branches of the GHQ, but to no avail.

This army, which was short of everything except spirit and morale, was distributed in both the wings of the country. The main force was in West Pakistan and three lightly armed infantry divisions were in East Pakistan. The latter had neither their full complement of heavy weapons nor the usual support of such weapons of Corps or Army.

In 1965, the Pakistan Army was comparatively small, but it was a highly trained and adequately equipped army. It had not been burdened with extra-military duties of a civil or political nature. After the Martial Law at the end of 1958, the army had been used as support to the civil adiministration actively for the first twenty-two days only. The Formation Commanders, generally speaking, had been in their ranks and appointments for a considerable period and had experience of many exercises and manoeuvres even at Corps level. Many units and some formations had had their 'battle inoculation' on the field firing ranges. It had not, therefore, lost any of its professionalism. Its standard of training and discipline had improved further. As for the manpower, it comprised seasoned soldiers and the army had not gone through any hurried and unplanned expansion.

When General Yahya Khan came into power in March 1969, he involved the Army, particularly its officers, more and more in civil administration and other duties of a political nature. The Armed Forces, particularly the Army, got a spurt of promotions. The number of higher ranks was almost doubled overnight. Such bulk promotions became a topic of ridicule even within the Army. For instance, after reading about the promotion of eleven Major Generals copied in Part II Orders of a unit, the Subedar-Major aptly remarked that during his long service he had not heard of so many Lance-Naiks promoted at one time. The selection system for officers' promotion was thrown overboard. Three brigadiers were promoted to the rank of Major General without having been declared

fit by the Selection Board. The COS Army was promoted to the rank of General. It is said that this was done a few minutes after the year 1970 was ushered in, at a new year party in the house of a friend of the President. When the party was in full swing, the COS was called and publicly asked to guess what new year's gift he was going to get. He blinked, and could not make the right guess. Thereupon he was pronounced General. The Defence Secretary had to be woken up in the early hours of the morning to make sure that the appointment was duly gazetted on New Year's day. A colonel became brigadier because the President had mischievously hailed him as brigadier. This capriciousness naturally resulted in a scramble for promotions at different levels. And, in the process a number of indifferent characters and social climbers acquired higher ranks and jobs bringing them close to the President. The top of the Officer Corps, proud of its professionalism, had drifted away from its ideals.

The appointment of Yahya Khan as C-in-C in 1966 and his out of turn promotion had caused considerable upheaval in senior ranks. The expansion of the Army in 1967-68 had further aggravated the situation as regards experienced senior commanders. Now the appointment of military governors in the provinces took away a number of high ranking and highly qualified officers, who should have been in the field instead of the Governors' Houses; a number of other senior officers were also involved on their staffs. With so many officers busy elsewhere in extra-military duties, its efficiency was seriously affected.

The army in West Pakistan although was not directly involved in the operations in the East, the burden of providing reinforcements and replacing casualties fell on the West. This had an undesirable effect on their efficiency.

The state of the troops in East Pakistan is worth recounting in some detail. 14 Infantry Division, which was permanently stationed in East Pakistan, had already undergone the stresses and strains of continuous Martial Law duties for about two years before the military action. Its later confinement to the cantonments, and the Awami League's well-planned campaign against it had also had its toll. Since the end of March 1971, this formation, along with 9 and 16 Infantry Divisions which arrived in April, had been fighting counter-insurgency actions, against the rebels, actively supported by

Indian Forces. These were strange operations for which the troops were neither equipped nor trained. It was also a peculiar sort of fighting for which they had not been mentally and physically prepared. The enemy was neither well-marked and identified nor were his lines of operations fixed, nor did it fight in accordance with the rules and methods of war known to the troops. In fact, it was worse than normal war.

The environments in East Pakistan were also new to the troops, the terrain was different and the climate was not the same. There were other hazards, some natural and others man-made, which were unknown to them before. Too many rivers and small streams, the peculiar type of rain and numerous obnoxious species of insects also proved bothersome. The unending dampness resulted in widespread footrot and odd and unfamiliar types of boils and skin rashes. The climate in general seemed to sap their energies and reduce their strength. A sense of being worn out was creeping in along with the wearing out of equipment and weapons. Nothing could be replaced.

The troops had been operating continuously for eight months against the daily mounting Indian and rebel activities. Although there had been spells of lull, they had been very brief. Since September the Indian artillery and mortar fire had been stepped up and their attacks along the borders were becoming common. The deployment of Pakistani troops was widespread, at places in platoons and sections. There was no hope of relief, and as a consequence, there was little or no rest for them. The man who had gone into the trench in April, if he survived and remained fit, was still there in November. The supplies were indifferent too. There was hardly any security, because enemy agents were present in every organ of the civil government and amongst the locals. No action, even if taken with the utmost secrecy, could escape these numerous agents. All these factors had put a heavy and constant strain on the troops. The prolonged atmosphere of insecurity was gradually compelling the troops to stay in their easily defensible locations. They were getting fixed, with no manoeuvrability left to them. The feeling of being surrounded was creeping in as any laxity on their part was invariably punished by the Mukti Bahini. And, mines planted by the enemy were taking a heavy toll. Stepping on a mine is a most horrifying experience and the mere idea gives one the creeps.

Many troops had been away from their homes and families for two to three years. A number of them had lost their dear ones and had not even been able to attend their funerals. Most of the troops serving in East Pakistan had moved at short notice, abandoning their families and leaving behind many domestic problems. Due to poor communications and censorship, private mail took long to reach them. A letter despatched from Peshawar took about 20 days to reach Rangpur; its further despatch to units and sub-units took another few days.

The war on the borders and the counter-insurgency operations within were continuous. Officers and men had been fighting for eight months without relief or rest. All this had its adverse effect on the efficiency of the troops, who were showing signs of fatigue. Casualties started mounting. At the beginning of the operations in March and April, the average daily casualty rate was probably less than 15 per day dropping to about 3 daily in May and June. From July onwards, it started rising sharply, and is said to have reached a figure of about 100 per day in November before open hostilities with India started. The facilities for evacuation of casualties and timely medical help were not satisfactory. Owing to scarcity of troops and wide areas of responsibility, the forces were spread over vast areas with extremely poor communications. As a result, casualties generally did not get the required treatment in time. For example a casualty would have to suffer about fourteen hours strenuous road journey or two days and two nights by train, to get from Rangpur to Dacca for specialist care. From the border to Rangpur would take another few hours depending on the distance. Therefore, a number of valuable lives which could have been saved were being lost. This had an extremely demoralizing effect on the troops. The casualties that the forces were taking without fighting on account of the Mukti Bahini guerrilla activities, were adding to the strain on the proud army.

During all these long and sustained operations, the higher echelons of command had not paid enough attention to morale, welfare and amenities. The importance of these measures for the troops engaged in operations under most trying circumstances had not been appreciated. It seems that too much reliance was placed on the unshakable morale of the troops. Their mental and emotional problems were not taken care of. Their warrior's ego was not being fed and catered for. No material was being provided in the

form of news bulletins, and the performance of the troops was not getting the required appreciation. The warrior was not made to feel that he was the most important person in the situation. Instead he was subjected to tremendous anti-army propaganda both at home and abroad, and accused of all sorts of things he had not done or even thought of doing. Little or no effort was made to keep him out of the reach of enemy propaganda. He was not provided with any motivation and nothing was done to inspire him with faith in the cause and the ideal that he was fighting for. There is no doubt now that, at a certain stage of the counter-insurgency operations, even the rank and file had lost faith in the likely efficacy of a military solution to the East Pakistan problem.

West Pakistan was too far away and there was hardly any news from there. The local information media were not giving the required coverage and the radio programmes were totally ineffective and colourless. The Indian side, on the contrary was putting up a virulent, methodical and successful psychological warfare programme. There was no confidence in our own broadcasts as they presented no clear cut objectives and did not take any positive positions. Visual proofs, discussions and analysis of the activities of the anti-state elements were altogether missing. Nor were the atrocities committed by such elements condemned. No attempts were made to create public goodwill through creation of lobbies in all walks of life. Even the Government White Paper on the East Pakistan situation did not come out till August. No effective psychological warfare cell had been formed to advise and assist the information media in producing effective material. What half-hearted attempts did materialize became subjects of ridicule. Gradually, in the absence of all these the soldier was developing the feeling that, despite his superhuman efforts and sacrifices, he had been forgotten by the nation.

The Adjutant-General and other welfare agencies had failed to muster amenities and gifts even from West Pakistan, which could have reminded the troops that they were very much in the heart and mind of the nation. Whereas in East Pakistan there was virtual state of war, in West Pakistan things continued on peacetime basis. The decision making authorities, based in West Pakistan, seemed hopelessly out of tune with the demands of the situation in the East. There was always a delayed reaction to reports and requests from Dacca, which sometimes took as long as two months to get a decision.

The public in West Pakistan could not appreciate the staggering task that the armed forces had been given in East Pakistan. Nor were any steps taken to keep the people informed. To understand its dimensions and appreciate the performance of troops, it is essential to compare the guerrilla war in East Pakistan with one recent and one current example. First, take the case of Algeria in 1960. It was a French colony situated about 400 miles away from France. Its population at that time was only 10 million as compared to France's 50 million. Out of the 10 million approximately one million were French settlers who were loyal to the mother country. Algeria was completely surrounded by French military power where she had committed about one million troops. Egypt, USSR and China, who supported the Algerian guerrillas, were far away from Algeria and were not assisting the Algerians with advice and technical man-power inside that country. The second example is that of South Vietnam. The population of the USA, the leading military industrial power in the world, is about 200 million. The population of South Vietnam is approximately 15 million, out of which two million are fighting with one million American troops, which have been steadily reduced since 1969. South Vietnam's border with North Vietnam, with a population of 20 million, is only about 100 miles long. The whole of South Vietnam is surrounded by US and South Vietnamese military power. There is no dearth of war material and equipment for these forces.

East Pakistan, on the other hand, had a population of 70 million, most of which had gradually been alienated. East Pakistan's border with India is about 2,000 miles long, whereas the distance from West Pakistan is 3,000 miles with hostile waters in between. Pakistan had only three infantry divisions without their own components of heavy weapons, and could not look forward to any substantial relief or reinforcements. Some foreign experts at the time had estimated that Pakistan would need 250,000 to 300,000 troops trained in counter-insurgency operations and fully backed up by socio-political campaigns to control the situation in East Pakistan. India, a major industrial power at least five times as big as Pakistan, was openly supporting the East Pakistan guerrillas with men, material and technical advice and training. Unlike the other countries mentioned above, Pakistani troops were not backed by any political and psychological campaign from the Central or Provincial Government. Even West Pakistan was not united behind them. Against all these great odds the troops had still succeeded in securing their

initial objectives and defied all the Mukti Bahini efforts fully supported by India. But no political advantage was taken of their success. Considering the dimensions of the task given to them, their performance was nothing short of a miracle.

India's continuous and daily increasing pressure on the borders was affecting the morale of the troops. A feeling was setting in that in the event of war they would be cut off from West Pakistan and no help would reach them. They would be left in the lurch to fend for themselves in the face of the Indian Army and the hostile population. The officers and men were affected by home-sickness and a sense of isolation was creeping in. These feelings were further heightened by the fact that the President, who was also the C-in-C, did not visit East Pakistan even once during those dark months, and the visits of the COS, Army and other senior officers too were few and far between. This absence gave a potent handle to the Indian propaganda. The East Pakistan population, including the West Pakistani elements was anxious that the President should come and see the prevailing conditions for himself. There were whisperings, rumours and speculations as to why he did not come. Some thought that he was too scared to visit the province; others believed that he was too engrossed in his gay living to bother about what happened in East Pakistan. The troops particularly wanted to see their C-in-C in their midst. They argued that if he could visit the Lahore and Sialkot borders, he could come to them as well. His visit would have helped to counter the Indian propaganda that they were hostages at the mercy of the Indians and the Mukti Bahini. But the President never visited them even once since the military action had started in March 1971. There would hardly be a case in military history where an army fighting a most difficult operation did not at all see their C-in-C for nine months, and saw the second-in-command (the COS) only twice during that period, once in August and again in October, 1971. They had become a forgotten army.

As stated earlier, the troops did not understand the logic of the long-drawn-out and apparently purposeless operations. They seemed to be achieving nothing better than what they had already accomplished by the end of April 1971. Criticism of the regime was, therefore, gradually becoming widespread. And there was growing resentment against the handling of the situation from West Pakistan, which was doing little to arm and reinforce them or take effective steps against India to relieve the pressure on them.

These feelings, which had originated amongst officers, had overwhelmed the jawans by October. It was being increasingly felt that the difficult position had come about owing to the lack of foresight and erratic political vision of the rulers. Pessimism prevailed because military action had not ended secessionism. On the contrary, the prolongation of military action had brought a strong sense of unity to the rebels.

As the Indian pressure mounted and invasion became imminent, complaints about the passive policy being followed by the Government started getting sharper and more frequent. For instance, a young officer writing to his parents in West Pakistan summed up these feelings thus: "India is responsible for the present crisis in East Pakistan. It is well known that supply of arms and ammunition and all other help to anti-state elements comes from India. Indian artillery continues pounding our positions with thousands of shells every day. The Indian Air Force is violating our air space regularly. We have suffered thousands of casualties, but what has our Government done so far? It has cried mercy, mercy, mercy and peace, peace and peace. Should it be called too much patience or cowardice? Troops do not like to die in a passive battle. They believe that one day of a tiger's life is far better than one hundred years of a jackal's life."

9, 14 and 16 Infantry Divisions were some of the best of the Pakistan Army, which in their earlier actions, had successfully put down the well-planned insurgency. They had carried out the task given to them, efficiently and swiftly and had now been engaged for eight long months in futile operations whose objectives had not been defined. They were still fighting tenaciously but had reached the last stages of battle fatigue. In spite of all the handicaps, they still projected the impression of being full of fight and confidence. With all its visible high spirits the three divisions of the army in East Pakistan, without their normal heavy weapons and logistic support and, still worse, with only one brave PAF squadron which had already been reduced in size by frequent calls on it during the last eight months, were not sufficient to fight the insurgency on their hands. The small Navy of gunboats, which like other services, had given a very good account of itself, was not strong enough to control the rivers of East Pakistan, leave alone the sea route from West Pakistan. India's massive invasion was looming large on the horizon and in the event of that happening the armed forces in East

Pakistan would be confronted with an impossible task, strategically and logistically. Therefore, the maintenance of their morale would become an acute problem unless succour came from West wing and the armed forces in West Pakistan played the role according to plan, effectively and quickly. These officers and men in East Pakistan were facing an all-out invasion.

CHAPTER XI

INDIA INVADES EAST PAKISTAN

INDIA invaded East Pakistan openly and in strength on the night of November 20/21, the eve of Eid, a sacred night for the Muslims which heralds the day of joy for them. The information was conveyed on the telephone by the COS Eastern Command to VCGS which was confirmed by a signal in the morning on November 21. The VCGS at once contacted the COS Army, at his residence. After two hours' discussion the latter dismissed him without any decision or instructions. The CGS learnt about the attack the same evening on his return from Lahore where he had gone for Eid and rushed to the MI Operation Room for the latest situation. It was from there that he rang up the COS Army and asked him to come for a briefing the next morning along with the President. The request was declined as he and the President had planned to visit troops in Sialkot that day. The CGS tried to persuade the COS to postpone the Sialkot visit but to no avail. However, as the briefing had been announced, the C-in-C Air turned up at the appointed time next morning, November 22, and the latest situation was explained to him. In the afternoon, when the President and the COS Army landed back from Sialkot, the C-in-C, Air and the CGS were waiting for them at the airfield and it was only their firmness which persuaded the President and the COS to come to the MI Operation Room. Even at that critical juncture, the COS was suggesting an afternoon siesta for the President and postponment of the briefing till later in

the evening. The DMI, along with other officers, was ready with his brief. He emphasized that the complexion of the operations had completely changed. Prior to the present attacks, India had been actively operating along with the Mukti Bahini and providing all types of fire support to the latter. The open attack now amounted to naked aggression. Although, the Indian attacks were still only nibbling thrusts, the Indian forces with artillery and armour had entered Pakistan territory and in substantial numbers. When the DMI had finished his discourse, the President remarked that he would require a couple of hours to think over the situation, and ordering a conference at the President's House the same evening at 6.30, he departed.

The conference was held at the appointed time. The Defence Secretary, Mr. Ghiasuddin Ahmad, who had been designated as Defence Adviser, the COS Army, Officiating Foreign Secretary, Mr. Mumtaz Alavi, and the CGS, Lieutenant-General Gul Hassan, were called inside while the DGISI, the VCGS, the DMO and the DMI were asked to wait outside. An observer who was present said the President looked completely nonchalant, casual and almost unconcerned. At this short and non-serious meeting, the President remarked 'What can I do for East Pakistan? I can only pray.' Thus dismissed, the officiating Foreign Secretary went away to draft his despatch to the United Nations.

The despatch spelt out the charge that Indian divisions consisting of 100,000 troops had attacked at Jessore, Chittagong, Sylhet and Rangpur. On November 23, emergency was declared in the country. The people had expected a vigorous retaliation and when no serious official reaction came forth, they felt confused. It is hard to appreciate the purpose of declaring an emergency then when its only repercussions were on trade and industry in the country. The declaration of emergency was an exercise in futility and gave Yahya Khan's opposite number in India an opportunity of acting out the facade of the aggrieved party, who had no choice but to also follow suit.

President Yahya Khan was still deluding himself that a full scale war could be avoided. His actions or to be more precise, his inactions, served to play down the significance of the Indian attack. He was thus playing into the hands of India which was anxious to keep the war out of the world press. On the other hand, she continued giving out concocted stories of Pakistan's offensive into Indian territory. If Yahya Khan was waiting for India to declare

a war, he was again making a mistake. He should have remembered that declaration of wars had gone out of fashion with the Second World War. The Arab-Israel War was never declared. The war in Vietnam had gone on for seven long years without a declaration. India had been fighting an undeclared war for some time on East Pakistan borders. In fact, the aggressor's intentions in such situations are to keep the war from the public eye as long as possible. Yahya Khan's casual attitude towards India's invasion and his efforts to play it down left the invaders free to continue with their military aggression without political or diplomatic hindrance. Here was a classical example of a wise Japanese saying: 'Wage war silently and anonymously.' By refusing to start a vigorous offensive from the West, Yahya Khan made the survival of the East Pakistan garrison, practically impossible.

From the evidence available, at present, it appears that though General Yahya Khan had openly declared that an attack on East Pakistan would mean immediate retaliation, he was mentally not prepared to accept that the war had started. He had all along maintained that there would be no war. Had he believed otherwise, the troops on East Pakistan borders deployed in a counter-insurgency role would have been ordered to concentrate on their battle positions. He, however, refused to accept the situation although the armed forces in West Pakistan had been brought to a state of alert in October 1971. The appreciation of the President, according to a reliable source, remained that there would be no war. Vice-Admiral Muzaffar Hasan, the then C-in-C Navy, and some other senior officers had been told even in the middle of November that the probability of a full scale war with India was remote.

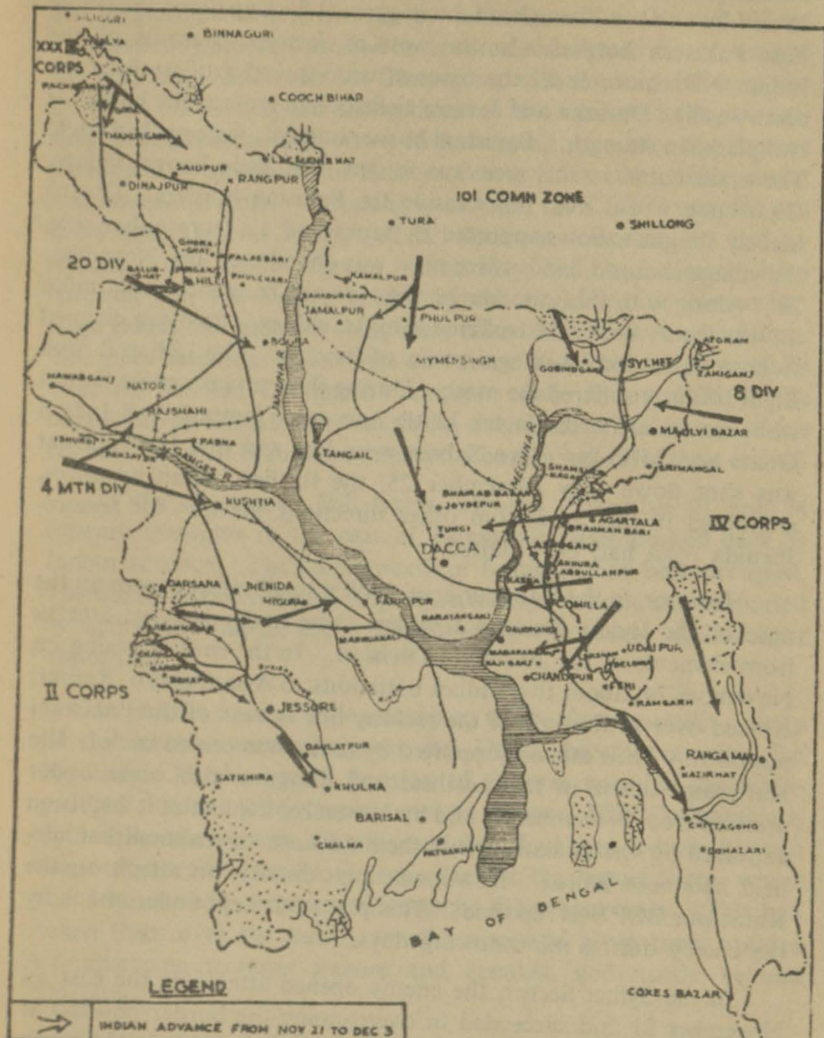
Nor was the matter officially brought to the notice of the United Nations Security Council. When the news reached there, the Third Committee of the General Assembly was in session and the delegates at the United Nations expected that Pakistan would now bring the matter to the Security Council. Entire delegations of important countries had assembled in anticipation to listen to the Permanent Representative of Pakistan who, they thought, would say that the situation had taken a turn to warrant its consideration by the Security Council. No such statement was made by the Pakistani representative. In fact, the Pakistan Mission at the United Nations was warned that no move should be made to request a meeting without express instructions from the government. The

UN Secretary-General was simply approached by the President on November 23 to use his personal influence to which the latter had replied that for the moment he had gone as far as he could within the Charter.

The failure to move the Security Council at this stage was to have a far-reaching adverse effect on the Council's consideration of the problem later. By not lodging a complaint in the Security Council about Indian invasion, as soon as it had been launched, Pakistan assumed a posture different from that of a victim of aggression. It weakened credibility of its charge regarding India's attack as well as the scale of her military action. The effect on friendly countries of this 'no-anxiety' on Pakistan's part produced the impression that either the Government was detached from realities, or perhaps, she was so militarily strong and so confident of making decisive gains in the Western theatre that she did not wish her freedom of action to be restricted by the Security Council. It would appear significant that no move was made by any member of the the Council for a meeting. The Soviet Union, as India's ally, had every reason to avoid a Council meeting because it did not want the Indian plans regarding East Pakistan to be obstructed when India had not yet seized substantial territory. The Soviet attitude placed the United States and other Council Members in a difficult position. At that stage, making of a move on their own would have appeared extraordinary when no request had come from Pakistan. The situation would have been different if Pakistan had asked for a Council meeting and been opposed by the Soviet Union. In that case the USA and China could easily have mustered support from a majority of the Council members for an urgent meeting. It must be recorded that the invasion of East Pakistan by India is perhaps the only instance of an armed attack by one member state of the United Nations upon the territory of another which the victim did not immediately bring before the Security Council.

Even the Bilateral Agreement with the USA which envisaged all assistance from Washington in the event of aggression against Pakistan, was also not immediately invoked. It was done, hesitatingly much later, and the results of the effort are known only to General Yahya Khan, who dealt with this issue personally and without any one else knowing about it.

On the night of November 20/21 the Indian Army supported by tanks advanced on as many as 23 salients. The spread out



INVASION OF EAST PAKISTAN

border probes on a few selected areas between the period October 15 and November 20 escalated into a general flare up along the whole East Pakistan borders. In the west of Jessore, elements of the Indian 9 Division, under the cover of wide-spread artillery fire even on towns like Darsana and Jessore airfield, had crossed the border at two places in strength. Pakistani border outposts were pushed back. The main battle in this area was fought in a little known village, Gharibpur, about five miles inside the Pakistan borders. During fiercely fought action supported by tanks and air from either side, the village changed hands twice till it was abandoned on November 23. Along with this, another border town Chaughacha, six miles in, was lost. Both sides suffered tank casualties. Pakistan claimed to have destroyed seven against six of its own. The Indian 2 Sikh Light Infantry suffered the most. During these attacks, three Sabres while on an air strike in the battle area were jumped by 8 Indian Gnats and MIG-21. Two Sabres were lost and one Indian Gnat was shot down. By November 25, the further Indian advances, attempted in this area from other directions towards the Jessore-Jhenida road had been halted.

However, in the Rangpur area, Hilli a small railway town on the nose of the Indian Balurghat salient came under heaviest attacks from elements of the 20 Indian Division. In the early morning on November 24, about two Indian battalions, 6 Assam and 6 Rajput, crossed over to the east of the railway line in rear of the Pakistani positions. Their attack, supported by tanks, was beaten back. The Kurigram salient in the northeast of Rangpur also came under pressure from November 21 and by November 25, half of it had been captured by the Indians. But their advance to Lalmunirhat airfield had been halted. In Mymensingh district, an attack on the Kamalpur BOP was repulsed. This place was kept under attack by the enemy during the following days.

In the Sylhet Sector, the enemy opened attacks in the east on November 21 and succeeded in overrunning the border position at Zakiganj and Atgram. It was followed by an attack in the north along the Shillong-Sylhet road by 5/5 Gurkhas which after two days heavy but intermittent fighting was repulsed. The same day, a couple of border outposts adjoining Brahmanbaria along the eastern border were pushed back in the first onrush but the heavy attack of 311 Indian Mountain Brigade preceded by intense artillery support around border town of Kasba was halted. The Indian 19 Punjab having come under flanking fire suffered heavy casualties.

The position in this area was further stabilised by counter-attacks. The Indian build up, however, continued. Down south along this border more posts were overrun by the Indians in the Belonia salient and the heavy pressure exerted in this area endangered Feni town and the only road that connects Chittagong with the remainder of the province. The daily increasing threat to this vital road communication prompted the COS Army in Rawalpindi to advise the Eastern Command to reinforce the Eastern Sector from other unimportant and inactive sectors. Surprisingly enough, the COS Army did not know that General Niazi, and his divisional commanders had no reserves. The small reserves which they had, had already been consumed in the border battles by the beginning of November. Even Dacca had been left completely naked without even a battalion. The three battalions which were sent from West Pakistan to partially meet the Eastern Command's request made by its COS in the conference at GHQ on November 10, already described in a previous chapter had also been committed into battles just after their arrival.

In the Chittagong Hill tracts, between November 21 and 24 forward positions in the east of Rangamati were pushed back by Indian advance. The salient north of Ramgarh had been occupied. The Indian advance, with a brigade on man-pack basis and supported by helicopter and air-drops continued in this area, against light opposition.

In additon to large scale attacks on the borders, guerrilla activity in the interior particularly around Dacca became intense. On November 25, the overall position of the war was that the multi-pronged Indian Army thrust towards Jessore, Hilli, Lalmunirhat, Sylhet, Brahamanbaria, Comilla and Feni had been halted although some territory had been lost particularly in the Jessore Sector where the Indians had occupied Chaugacha-Gharibpur area. This had taken them over the nearby marshy area and given them options of advancing towards Jessore and Jhenida, and north beyond Darsana.

After almost a lull of three days, the Indians renewed their attacks all along the front. The intensity of artillery fire on Jessore and Darsana was increased and limited thrusts were launched towards Jessore from the west and northwest. Jibannagar was occupied by the Indians on November 27 and Darsana on December 2. The heaviest attack during the next five days came from other directions. In Dinajpur district, Pachagarh was attacked from the

east and after repeated attacks originally led by the Indian 7 Maratha Light Infantry, the Indians succeeded in capturing the town. The fall of this town cut off the Titalya salient completely. By December 3, Indians had succeeded in capturing Boda, an important town and road junction south of Pachagarh. But further south, the troops around Indian salient of Balurghat, particularly at Hilli held their positions against repeated attacks, and were also able to improve them by local counter-attacks. In the Mymensingh Sector, fighting continued near Kamalpur. In the Sylhet Sector, further limited gains were made by the Indians in the north and the east. By December 2, Shamshernagar and its air-strip had been occupied by them, and border outposts in this area had been withdrawn. This was followed by a two pronged attack from Agartala towards Akhauara by two Indian brigades of the 57 Mountain Division supported by a squadron of tanks each. It succeeded in surrounding Pakistani positions in Abdullahpur and reaching the railway line in the south of the town. The pressure in this area was becoming intense. Comilla was also attacked and further attempts were made to cut off Feni from the Indian bulge immediately north of it.

In the thirteen days following the Indian invasion of East Pakistan, battles raged all along the borders, increasing in intensity daily. Pakistani troops with all the handicaps in numbers and equipment fought these tactical battles with tenacity. The Indians had however been able to establish lodgement areas particularly in Jessore, Dinajpur and Sylhet districts. But the success had been achieved at a heavy cost. However, all the major Indian attacks in Comilla and Brahamanbaria had failed to gain any worthwhile objectives. The net result of the thirteen days fighting was that the Indians had captured about 60 square miles northwest of Jessore and were poised to advance in all directions. In the extreme north and northwest in Dinajpur district, they held about 150 square miles north of Thakurgaon and railway line to its east which gave them tactical advantage of operating between the rivers towards south and southeast. The brave garrison at Hilli which several Indian attempts had failed to reduce, still acted as a thorn in the Indian side. Only small pockets had been occupied on the borders in Sylhet district, the major gain in this area being Shamshernagar with its airstrip. Almost one quarter of the Chittagong Hill tracts had been occupied but this did not give any major tactical advantage to the Indians.

The Eastern Command had still not comprehended the danger and Niazi was still under the impression that the Indians were trying

to capture a chunk of East Pakistan territory and their attacks would be confined to the borders. Nor was any anxiety or sense of urgency shown by the President who himself seemed to believe that the Indian war on the Pakistan borders was only meant to capture some parts of East Pakistan for the rebels. The failure particularly of general Niazi—the man on the spot—to comprehend the correct situation even at this critical juncture was fatal. His misappreciation endangered the security of his command and reduced its chances of giving a fair battle to the enemy.

In the interior a large number of towns and focal points which were supposed to have been converted into strong points were surrounded by the rebels. Dacca's defences were lying unmanned without any fighting troops in the area. The Eastern Command had no plans to withdraw the troops to Dacca. India had succeeded in keeping the first phase of the attack on East Pakistan as unobtrusive as she could. She had continued to insist that Pakistani charges of Indian involvement were merely propaganda designed to bring about international intervention in East Pakistan. She did not allow foreign press correspondents to visit the border areas. A few favourites were taken on carefully planned and well conducted tours. The world was fed with official hand-outs and speeches of the Indian leaders. Pakistan, on the other hand, was almost begging every foreign correspondent who could come to Dacca to visit the border areas and see for himself who was attacking whom. It was a complete reversal of the earlier policies followed by the two governments. Pakistan which had made the mistake of deporting foreign correspondents at the start of the military action in March, was now freely allowing them to move wherever they liked. On the other hand, India which had given them a free entry during the first few months of Pakistan's military action had clamped on a complete embargo and confined them to Calcutta. Pakistan had handled the press so badly that whatever she said now was suspect, and so successful was the relentless Indian propaganda that when India did attack on November 21, more than half the world did not believe Pakistan. It had already lost on the political and diplomatic fronts when the Indians attacked.

On December 3, the COS Army, at last, warned the Eastern Command by a signal that all sources including intelligence make it evident that Indians would shortly launch a massive offensive against East Pakistan. He advised the commander, Eastern Command, to redeploy his force, keeping the current situation in view. He

further advised him that his new positions should take into consideration areas of tactical, political, and strategical importance. The effect of this vague advice on General Niazi is not known but so far as it can be ascertained at present no action seems to have been taken on this advice. The second phase of Indian invasion of East Pakistan which opened in the early hours of December 4, was, however, preceded by limited air and ground attacks from West Pakistan. Pakistan had hesitated for thirteen days before activating the western front. India, however, used Pakistan's counteraction on the western front as an excuse for her second phase of attack on East Pakistan and by persistent propaganda turned the date of war against Pakistan from November 21 to December 3.

On December 4, at least one of his divisional commanders advised Lieut-General Niazi to withdraw from the forward areas. Even at this late stage, Niazi who was losing control over the battle for East Pakistan, does not seem to have taken any action. He made the strategic blunder of not giving clear orders for a general withdrawal to salvage the situation. On December 5, the COS Army at last advised him that the losing of some territory would be insignificant and that he must continue to concentrate on operational deployment in vital areas aimed at keeping the maximum enemy force involved in East Pakistan.

During the early hours of December 4, the Indians launched massive ground attacks, mainly from the launching sites captured during the preceding thirteen days. Intense battles raged all along the borders for three days where the outnumbered and outgunned, scattered and exhausted battalions and companies of Pakistani troops fought back gallantly to stop the Indian avalanche. The great Indian pressure made the troops fight with complete abandon. Their physical supremacy, bravery and will were no match for the enemy's overwhelmingly superior forces. Strung along in penny packets, the Pakistani troops started giving way and falling back to positions in the rear.

Along with the battles on the frontiers, India commenced her major air offensive against the Dacca base. As explained earlier, it was the only PAF operational airbase in the whole of East Pakistan from where the already depleted Sabre squadron of the PAF was operating. For three days this brave squadron supported by the only Light-Anti-Aircraft Regiment (6 L.A.A.) in the province defeated the Indian designs. The Indians lost 28 aircraft before they

succeeded on December 6, in damaging the runways beyond repair. The squadron was thus rendered unoperational and the Indians achieved complete mastery of the skies over East Pakistan.

The Indian Eastern Fleet having no opposition whatsoever closed in on the East Pakistan's ports which it had already blocked. The Indian aircraft carrier 'Vikranth' ventured into waters opposite Cox's Bazar and started flying missions in support of its ground forces. At the same time some Indian gun boats commenced probing into the river mouths.

As the Indian invasion developed to its full force on December 4, the Headquarters Eastern Command seemed to have lost control over the operations. The main causes which had been foreseen by a number of officers on the spot were three. The scattered nature of deployment in units and sub-units, the domination of rail, river and road communications by hostile locals and the absence of any overall and clear plan of withdrawal. One divisional and some birgade commanders whose units and sub-units were deployed over large areas could not influence the battles. The movement of troops from one place to another could not be assured. Their command and control boiled down to advising their subordinates if they could contact them by wireless or by physical presence The newly formed *ad hoc* headquarters largely dependent on civilian telephone links, which had become unreliable and insecure could only advise their subordinates by reaching them in person.

The progress of the war in different sectors up to December 6 was as follows. A commando company along with locally recruited Razakars and tribal volunteers in the Chittagong Hill tracts was making the three Indian columns advancing from the northeast, the east and the southeast fight for each mile of territory. Till December 6, the Indians had not been allowed to capture any known town in the area. Cox's Bazar and the area in the south of Chittagong was still being dominated by 24 FF.

Around Feni, a town in the north of Chittagong and on the railway and road going from Chittagong to other parts of the province, two companies of 15 Baluch holding defences on the northeast of Feni bore the brunt of the Indian attack, which they repulsed. After having fought back two more attacks successfully the whole of 15 Baluch pulled back to cover the main road in the area. The state of exhaustion of the troops in this area was so acute that some of the

positions of 15 Baluch were run over by the enemy when the defending troops could not even keep their eyes open. As the position around Feni bulge was getting untenable, 53 Brigade to fall back to Laksham. By December 6, 53 Brigade had concentrated in Laksham after having fought rearguard action at almost every mile of the territory it surrendered. It had been completely surrounded, and cut off from Chittagong, Comilla and Chandpur. Laksham was attacked repeatedly but it held out. The enemy later contained it with tanks and sent one brigade between Comilla and Laksham to occupy Mudafarganj and another south of Laksham towards river Meghna. In the meantime, 117 Brigade, after fighting its frontier battles, had fallen back to Comilla and the hills immediately south of Comilla and was being pressed hard from all directions. Both 53 and 117 Brigades had suffered heavy casualties, some units as much as 40 per cent during the three-week battles.

The fiercest battle on the eastern border was, however, fought around Akhaura. The battle which had raged there since November 21, had increased in intensity by the early hours of December 4. 27 Brigade in this area with only two regular battalions was still fighting back gallantly. 12 FF of this gallant brigade rose to the height of fighting skill and bravery. The Indians seemed to be getting desperate in their attempt to capture this hub of railway communications; without clearing it they could not have advanced any further. Despite almost hourly mounting casualties, they continued attacking with fresh troops. There was often hand to hand fighting but the exhausted Pakistani troops under their untiring, brave and skilful brigade commander Saadullah, continued defying the increasing Indian onslaught supported by tanks and air. At one stage of the battle when 12 FF had been surrounded from all sides, the Brigadier himself led a successful bayonet charge to break the encirclement. He snatched the first rifle available and fixing the bayonet shouted to his jawans, 'come, let us show them what we are made of'. Later on December 6, the enemy through sheer weight of numbers and fire power succeeded in overrunning 27 Brigade gun positions and the brigade withdrew west behind Titas canal. 313 brigade in the north of Brahmanbaria with 30 FF and 22 Baluch having fought its frontier battles had fallen back on Maulvi Bazar. Still further north, in the Sylhet area 202 *ad hoc* Brigade was keeping the enemy at bay but gradually giving ground on all its vast front in the east and the north.

In the north of Mymensingh, a single battalion, 31 Baluch under its Lieut-Colonel Sultan Mahmood was dominating the whole of the north undaunted by the great odds against it. From the enemy point of view, the Baluch position must have looked desperate. The enemy Brigade Commander sent a letter to Sultan Mahmood conveying to him his impressions. He wrote that Sultan was completely encircled and boasted of his better artillery and air support and suggested to him to surrender to save his command's lives. He threatened dire consequences if his suggestion of surrender was not followed and if Pakistani troops should fall into the hands of the Mukti Bahini. He also made a plea that the civilian carrying the letter should be treated like a human being. The audacious Colonel at once wrote a reply in which he wished the Indian Commander well and told him there was no question of a surrender. He thought the Indian Commander did not have enough air support and should ask for more. As for the uncalled for remark about the treatment of the emissary, he ended his letter with the hope that when they met in battle, the Indian Commander would have a sten gun in his hand instead of the pen which he wielded so well. 'Till such time. God be with you.'

In the Rangpur Sector, Pakistani troops were thinning out from the Kurigram salient. Enemy air remained most active in the area and succeeded in damaging the bridge over the river Tista. The enemy offensive in the northwest had cleared Thakurgaon and was leading south towards Birganj. Another enemy column advancing due east had occupied Nawabganj and was moving towards Pirganj over River Karatoya with the intention of cutting the withdrawal of Pakistani troops south. 4 FF in Hilli and 13 FF in its south were still holding out valiantly after heavy attacks from the west and the north. The Indian commander had tried all means at his disposal but his repeated attacks from various sides, supported by tanks, intense artillery fire and air strikes had all failed. He still did not know what to do with the Pakistan battalions.

In the Jessore area, the Indians launched a three-pronged attack. The enemy column advancing from Chaugacha with tanks and infantry mounted in armoured personnel carriers, captured a road junction on the main road immediately north of Jessore, thereby blocking the Jessore-Jhenida road. Still another column advanced from Darsana towards Chaudanga in the north and towards Jhenida in the west. 6 Punjab in area Kaliganj in the north of

ordered to pull back and proceed to Daulatpur a few miles north of Khulna and join 107 Brigade which had been falling back towards Khulna. During the night of December 6/7 the battalion successfully fought their way through the enemy occupied area and headed for its new location.

There were no troops in Jessore nor any defences prepared on the approaches towards which the enemy was advancing. The Indians entered Jessore cantonment on December 7 without any opposition and found the divisional ammunition dump intact.

The conditions in the interior were getting completely out of hand. Armed gangs were raising their heads almost all over the province. The countryside was mostly in their hands and as the Indian Army approached even the people in the towns came out to harass the Pakistani troops.

According to Lieut-General Niazi's assessment of the fighting up to the morning of December 6, eight Indian Divisions with four Armoured Regiments, thirty-nine battalions of the Border Security Forces and 60 to 70 thousand rebels under Indian command had been fully committed inside East Pakistan. All enemy attacks had been supported by air which had caused maximum damage with rockets and napalm bombs. In the interior the rebels were extremely active and causing the maximum damage by cutting lines of communications and destroying bridges, ferries and boats. This had made replenishment of supplies, reinforcing and readjusting of positions extremely difficult. Chittagong, he considered was likely to be cut off. Dinajpur, Rangpur, Maulvi Bazar, Brahmanbaria, Laksham, Chandpur and Jessore were under heavy pressure and the situation was likely to become critical. His troops had already been involved in active operations for nine months and were now committed to very intensive battle without rest or relief. On account of the pitched battles fought for seventeen days casualty rate in men and material had greatly increased. Absence of tanks, artillery and air had further aggravated the situation. Desertion and defection of Razakars and Mujahids to the enemy with arms had also increased. Nonetheless his troops had inflicted the maximum casualties and caused the maximum possible attrition on the enemy. He also informed GHQ that his troops were falling back on pre-planned defensive positions, and resorting to strong point defence. The assessment ended up with the assertion that he would fight it out to the last man and to the last round, a course he had no will or desire to follow.

As the Indian pressure built up, the tone of Niazi's messages seemed to have become despondent and desperate. He started emphasising his critical shortages of troops and weapons and grim course of events. This trend got accentuated with time.

By December 6, the Indians with their numerical and technical supremacy had succeeded in pushing the Pakistani forces back from their forward positions all along the frontiers to their so-called strong points of Niazi's concept. The troops, when deployed along the borders in penny packets, had kept some cohesiveness and co-ordination in their defensive positions. When they fell back, the units and at places brigades achieved a measure of concentration, but paradoxically, lost coordination in the defences. Large gaps were created between various positions which could only be kept under surveillance by reserves, which were not available. Therefore, the great achievements of Pakistani troops on the tactical plane during the frontier battles remained unexploited towards achieving the main object of saving East Pakistan. They succeeded in delaying the Indian advance and inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy but the Eastern Command had no plans to make this tactical success productive. On the other hand, once the Eastern Command realised that India had decided to capture the whole of East Pakistan by force, it was completely paralysed, Lieut-General Niazi had lost control over the situation and it looked as if he had lost the will to continue the fight.

CHAPTER XII

THE FALL OF DACCA

THE forlorn position that the troops in East Pakistan had been placed in and the irresolution of Niazi at last dawned on the high command. The effort to keep him going was started on December 5, initially perhaps to gain time for the pending planned counter-offensive from West Pakistan. On that date the COS Army told him that there was every hope of Chinese acitivites soon. Of course there was no basis for such expectations. However, as soon as General Niazi was given this indication, he started pestering the high command with requests to expedite Chinese activities and invariably got a reassuring reply. On December 8, the high command seemed to have got so alarmed at the complete collapse of the HQ Eastern Command that it gave it an assurance that Chinese activities had begun. This reply in definite terms might also have been necessitated by a perturbing message from Governor Malik to the President on December 7. The Governor explained the military situation as told to him by Niazi to the effect that the troops had been fighting heroically against India's numerical and technical supremacy and without adequate artillery and air support. He said that the front in the eastern and western sectors had completely

collapsed and the loss of the whole territory east of the Meghna river was only a matter of time. The loss of Jessore would act as a terrible blow to the pro-Pakistan population. Rebel activities were on the increase and were disrupting communications in the rear which had made the civil administration ineffective. Nothing could move from Chittagong or within the province. As a result all supplies were running short and Dacca would be without food, fuel and oil after seven days. Thereafter there would be complete paralysis of life. The Governor considered that the law and order situation in the areas vacated by the troops was pathetic and thousands of pro-Pakistan elements were being butchered by the Mukti Bahini with Indian troops standing by and abetting them. Millions of non-Bengalis and loyal elements were awaiting certain death. The Governor further maintained that at that stage any lip service from Western Powers or even material help short of direct physical intervention would not help. He gave notice that if any friend was expected to help then action should have an impact within the next 48 hours. In that case, the fight would continue, whatever the consequences. If, the Governor emphasized, no help was expected, negotiations should be opened in order to bring about a peaceful transfer of power, save military and civilian lives and avoid the misery that threatened millions of souls. He did not think it worthwhile to sacrifice so much when the end seemed inevitable.

The President promptly assured the Governor that all possible help was in hand. Full scale and bitter war was going on in the Western theatre and at the United Nations the world Powers were very seriously attempting to bring about a cease-fire. The Governor was advised to adopt stringent measures of food rationing so that the existing supplies might last maximum period to prevent a collapse. He also assured him that he was praying for him. As for the strategy to be adopted for continuing the fighting, he informed the Governor that the COS Army would instruct General Niazi. What instructions were issued by the COS Army on the subject is not known but the CGS instructed General Niazi to hold positions tactically in strength without any territorial considerations, even Chittagong could be left to its fate. This would be done with a view to maintaining the force intact and to inflict the maximum possible attrition in men and material on the enemy. Very late in the night on December 7, the President as C-in-C also addressed a message to General Niazi showing his pride in the performance of his troops against heavy odds and advised him to hold defensive positions regardless of

territory. He also instructed him to discuss the matter with the Governor. But the one action, which everyone expected was not taken. The offensive from West Pakistan on which all sights, particularly of the troops in East Pakistan were focused was taking long to materialise.

From the point of view of the troops in the field the situation did not look as grim as pointed out by General Niazi or the Governor. They had fought their battles on the borders for over a fortnight successfully and on the tactical level had acquitted themselves extremely well. They had withdrawn to new positions at most places in good order. In certain sectors the formations and units had been divided by Indian advances but those troops on their commanders' initiative had joined other units and formations. The troops were short of material and extremely tired but were still full of fight. Their spirit had not been broken. In spite of the heavy odds against them and extreme privation they had undergone, their morale was still unshaken. A success, even a limited victory in the West would have given new hope to them to carry on without fear of consequences. But that was not forthcoming. The high command, instead of concentrating on fighting the war in hand was now worried more about the cease-fire. All their actions were tuned to achieving this one objective—a cease-fire.

Meanwhile, the Indian forces, in the process of pushing the Pakistani troops back from their original position, had created big gaps in the new defensive complex of Pakistani positions. The Indians by now had realized that they could not win tactical battles and they therefore changed their tactics to win the war quickly. Their main strategic direction, that is Dacca, the seat of power was already established. The offensive efforts of various Indian Corps and divisions were directed towards racing to Dacca. In doing so, they had to confine the Pakistani forces into geographical compartments created by the mighty rivers of East Pakistan and stop them from withdrawing to cover Dacca and at the same time try to reach Dacca, which had already been denuded of all combat troops, before the Pakistani troops in the forward areas succeeded in falling back on it.

The Indian air effort was also directed to achieve this purpose and the Indian Air Force to do so used its supremacy most ruthlessly towards that end. After having immobilised the only PAF

squadron by destroying the Dacca airfield the IAF went flat out to achieve one main objective, and that was to stop all ground movement in the Province. The principal targets were the area 15 miles around Dacca, river ferries, airfields, rail junctions and rail terminal points at rivers. Any movement during the day invited disaster. As one sailor said 'you could not put even a small boat on the river without inviting Indian air action.' History had demonstrated time and again that the mighty rivers of East Pakistan proved a boon for defence if dominated by the defending forces. If and when they were not, they became great obstacles to defensive operations. With the introduction of the third dimension in war, superiority or even parity in air became essential for the utilization of these rivers to advantage. Therefore, with India having supremacy in the air, the rivers became unsurpassable obstacles for the Pakistani troops, except to a limited extent by night.

With all the preponderance of numerical and technical superiority on the ground, Russian amphibian tanks, bridging teams with specially selected equipment, with not even a single Pakistani plane to challenge the Indian mastery in the air, heliborne and para-troops and control of sea in the south of the Province and, above all, with the population with them, the Indian advance looked very slow. It was a great surprise particularly to the field commanders in East Pakistan why the Indian Army movements were so deliberate and slow. The Eastern Command had collapsed and its field formations and units were holding positions which were not coordinated. They just had to be contained and bypassed. In fact, the Indian Army did not even have to carry out some of the normal tasks of an army. All the intelligence was provided by the locals who also secured Indian Army lines of communications and guarded its flanks willingly and even provided transport for troops movement. It was a normal sight from a long range to watch an Indian company or a battalion being led on safe route by local guides along with 1000 or 2000 or even more of them carrying Indian loads in rickshaws, bicycles, on the shoulders and by other local mode of transport. On occasions, food was also made available to the advancing Indian columns by the locals. The Indian units did not have to fight, or fought only where they came into headlong collision with Pakistani troops. For the Indian Army, it looked mainly a movement exercise which they were taking a long time to complete.

As mentioned earlier, after withdrawing or having been pushed out of their forward positions, the Pakistani forces hurriedly reorga-

nised themselves into garrisons of varying dimensions and became isolated strong points at some important centres of communication and focal towns. Here they prepared themselves to fight for their survival and wherever Indian forces made contacts with them, they fought desperately. Most of them stayed intact and undefeated till the end and others had to give ground and fall back to new positions under the sheer weight of enemy supremacy on the ground and in the air.

After December 6, the Indians started fanning out to achieve their two objectives, firstly to stop Pakistan forces crossing the big rivers towards Dacca, and secondly to get to Dacca before any Pakistani force reached there. Denied the free use of communications, Pakistani forces fought their way back into towns and communication centres, where they prepared themselves to fight from new positions.

In the Jessore Sector, the Jessore cantonment had been occupied by the Indians on December 7, without any opposition. 22 FF, originally located in Benapole, covered the withdrawal of 107 Brigade towards Khulna and when 6 Punjab and 15 FF defences were ready around Daulatpur, fell back with the remainder of the Brigade to complete the defence complex of Khulna. The Indians, who had started their advance on Khulna from Jessore with a fresh division at last contacted 6 Punjab defence line at Daulatpur. Between December 11 and 15 repeated attacks, whose intensity was falling on 6 Punjab, were all repulsed. Only on the night of December 15/16, were the Indians successful in making a dent in the defences with their attack over the Bhairab river led by T-76 amphibian tanks. By the morning of December 16, Indian 4 Sikh Light Infantry had occupied positions overlooking the main Khulna-Jessore road. The Indian Air Force too had been most active in this area throughout. Besides normal straffing and bombing, it used napalm bombs liberally. Even two Indian Gun Boats which were trying to enter Khulna harbour on December 13, were destroyed by Indian aircraft; some of their officers and crew were rescued by Pakistanis and made prisoners.

57 Brigade which had fallen on Jhenida after fighting rearguard actions, crossed the Ganges at Paksay bridge and eventually joined up with 16 Division at Nator. On December 9, while some of its troops were in Kushtia, they were attacked by an enemy battalion

supported by tanks. The attack was repulsed and three tanks captured. In the meantime, Headquarters 9 Division (Major General M.H. Ansari) which had lost control earlier, had moved from Magura over the river Madhumati to Madhukhali and then to Faridpur.

In the Rangpur Sector, the enemy 20 Mountain Division moving southward detached one brigade at Birganj which advanced towards Dinajpur. Another strong column advancing towards Bogra, had captured Palasbari and were in contact with Pakistani positions in Ghoraghat and Gobindganj.

Major General Nazar Hussain Shah, Commander 16 Division, while returning with his Tactical Headquarters from Rangpur to Bogra was ambushed by the Indian infantry and tanks at night in area Pirganj. Everyone succeeded in escaping out of the ambush. The General, being a bulky man and not a fast runner got his ankle sprained and was given refuge by an East Pakistani. When the Indians arrived, the General's protector denied having seen any Pakistani officer and stuck to his statement even when the Indians threatened to rape the young daughter of the family. Later he took the General to Rangpur.

The brave garrison at Hilli still continued fighting and repulsing repeated attacks. On December 8, the enemy put in a strong attack supported by tanks on the southern flank of Pakistani positions held by 13 FF. It went through the positions but the men stayed in their trenches and fought back. Hand to hand fighting took place. The gallant leader, Major Sabir Kamal while personally manning an anti-tank gun, was hit by an enemy tank shell in the chest and fell at his post. His jawans, however, rallied and repulsed the attack after destroying seven tanks and inflicting heavy casualties. Major Sabir Kamal had acted as a great symbol of defiance and showed exemplary skill in handling his troops. The other officer who showed similar skill and gallantry in the battles around Hilli was Major Akram of 4 FF who also later fell. On December 9, to the great relief of the enemy, Hilli fell in the fourth attack of the day. The officers and jawans who were still alive were so exhausted that they could hardly move or keep their eyes open.

By December 11, all routes of withdrawal for 16 Division operating in the Rangpur-Bogra area towards Dacca, had been

closed and the communications—road, rail and river—had been destroyed. The division, however, remained as a cohesive fighting force and on December 16, when the order for surrender came, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Bogra and Nator were still held intact by its troops and those who had withdrawn into its area from 9 Division.

The stories of the enemy actions in the Mymensingh sector and of those in the eastern portion of the province cannot be treated separately as the advance to Dacca by the Indians started from these directions in right earnest. By December 8, in the north of Mymensingh, the Indians with the arrival of fresh reinforcements, had at last succeeded in pushing back 93 *ad hoc* Brigade of two regular battalions—33 Punjab and 31 Baluch—to the line Jamalpur-Phulpur. This brigade was ordered to move back to Dacca on December 10 and the next day it started moving from Mymensingh where it had concentrated.

After the fall of Shamshernagar, Sylhet had come under heavy pressure from the north and the east. On December 7, 202 *ad hoc* Brigade in Sylhet was reinforced by 313 Brigade which had operated in Shamshernagar area. Indian heliborne troops were landed on December 8 and 10 on some parts of the front; the Sylhet garrison, however, held on against repeated enemy attacks. Down south, 27 Brigade after fighting a battle on its Titas canal position on December 8, fell back to Ashuganj-Bhairab Bazar on the river Meghna where 14 Division Headquarters (Major General Qazi abdul Majid) had already moved and which was held by two companies of 21 AK. Its other battalion, 33 Baluch, originally deployed around Kasba was ordered to withdraw to a position between Brahamanbaria and Ashuganj. It fell back after fighting delaying actions all the way. In the meantime an enemy brigade group supported by a squadron of Indian 63 Cavalry advanced from the south along the river Meghna on to Ashuganj, in an attempt to cut off 33 Baluch. On December 9, 33 Baluch group upstuck and again led by the indomitable Brigadier Saadullah attacked in the reverse towards the river. The Indian Brigade advance was repulsed after inflicting heavy casualties. Among other things seven Indian tanks were captured. This tactical victory raised the morale of 27 Brigade still higher. In the meantime to thwart the Indian attack, two spans of the bridge had been destroyed. The portion of the Brigade left on the eastern side of the river was later withdrawn over the river without opposition.

117 Brigade in Comilla and Lalmai Hills, although under heavy pressure, was still holding fast. Brigadier Atif, the world famous olympic hockey player, had in the meantime refused repeated demands for surrender from the Indian Commander. Later, some prisoners of 39 Baluch who had fought some gallant actions had been sent under escort to Brigadier Atif with a message for surrender, failing which the other prisoners held by the Indians would be executed. The Brigadier promptly refused the offer. It was found later that a number of them were actually executed to show that the Indians meant business.

53 Brigade had firmly established itself at Laksham. Commander 39 *ad hoc* Division (Major General M. Rahim Khan) while proceeding to Laksham with his ADC and three Military Policemen as escort, got mixed up in a running battle just east of Mudafarnagar. This is how he learnt that the enemy had broken through and were behind 53 Brigade. Fifty commandos under Major Balal, who was later killed in action, along with other odd elements of Divisional Headquarters successfully fought for two days against the Indian column advancing to caputre Chandpur. At this stage Division HQ with its headquarters elements and forward hospital being cut off from its troops and about to be overrun, was ordered to withdraw by river to Narayanganj near Dacca. While doing so on December 8, the gun-boat carrying the HQ came under enemy air attack early in the morning. Amongst the heavy casualties suffered was the Divisional Commander, who was wounded. He later escaped to Burma before the surrender.

In the meantime, 53 Brigade in Laksham had repulsed all Indian attacks. The Brigade Commander, on learning the enemy's advance towards Chandpur decided to break through and link up with HQ Division after leaving 39 Baluch as a bait. He succeeded in breaking through the immediate encirclement but his leading elements—21 AK less two companies—while approaching Hajiganj were intercepted. This battalion without its heavy weapons fought a desperate battle against great odds and suffered heavy casualties. At this, the Brigade fell back again to Laksham. Later, Brigade HQ and 15 Baluch again broke out and after clearing the surrounding enemy forces, joined the garrison at Lalmai Hills near Comilla. Thereafter 39 Baluch also broke out of Laksham but was intercepted before reaching Lalmai Hills and suffered heavy casualties in a gallant fight.

Soon the Indian forces had occupied Chandpur, and Daudkandi thereby blocking all ròutes to Dacca from the east. Out of the troops deployed in this area only 27 Brigade had succeeded in crossing the river Meghna at Bhairab Bazar. Other brigades continued holding on at Sylhet, Comilla, Lalmai Hills and Laksham.

Meanwhile the efforts to keep Niazi going were continuing. However, the anticipated counter-offensive from West Pakistan was still not being launched. Now the aim of keeping the fight in progress in East Pakistan seemed to be to gain time for the materialisation of the cease-fire resolutions that were under discussion at the UN. On December 7, Pakistan had won a political and moral victory in the UN General Assembly by an impressive vote of 104 for a resolution favourable to Pakistan. It was gradually getting clear that the President and the COS Army had no intention to continue fighting and had already decided to withhold the planned counter-offensive against India in the West. However, Niazi who had lost control of the situation earlier, had no fight left in him now. He informed the CGS on December 9 that regrouping of troops and the readjustment of battle positions had become impossible owing to enemy air activity and the extreme hostility of the local population. Even night movement had been made impossible by rebel activity and ambushes. He added that airfields had been damaged extensively and all ferries and bridges had been destroyed, and heavy weapons and equipment had been damaged by enemy air action. He further informed that troops were however, fighting extremely well but the stress and strain was now telling hard on them. They had not slept for 20 days and had been under constant air and ground attacks. In spite of the extremely critical situation, he promised to continue fighting and requested for immediate strike on all enemy bases in his area and asked for reinforcement by airborne troops to protect Dacca.

By all available evidence, General Niazi had given up hope by December 10. On that date he asked the CGS for advice adding that the operational situation was extremely critical. All formations were under extreme pressure and mostly isolated in strong points and might be liquidated by overwhelming enemy strength. He also repeated the conditions of communications and the enemy air action as described by him on December 9. He added that troops were prepared to fight to the last man and last round which might not be too long due to already prolonged operations.

In the meantime, the Indians had stepped up their psychological warfare. The high watermark of this propaganda were the demands for surrender by the Indian Army Chief of Staff broadcast on December 8 which were repeated on December 11. Along with this, Indian air attacks on Dacca and the fifteen miles around it, were intensified.

On December 9, the Governor of East Pakistan sought the President's approval for certain proposals. What the proposals were is not known. However, the President left the matter entirely to his good sense and judgement and permitted him to take a decision on these proposals. He promised to approve 'Whatever efforts you make in your decisions to save senseless destruction of the kind of civilians that you have mentioned, in particular the safety of our Armed Forces.' He also assured the Governor that General Niazi would be instructed to accept his decision and arrange things accordingly. On receipt of this assurance, the Governor submitted his draft proposals for the President's approval on December 10. The gist of the Governor's proposals was that, as the conflict in East Pakistan had arisen as a result of political causes, it must end with a political solution. He on the authority of the President of Pakistan called upon the elected representatives of East Pakistan to arrange for the formation of a government in Dacca, and added that the will of the people of East Pakistan would demand the immediate vacation of their land by the Indian forces as well. He called upon the United Nations to arrange for a peaceful transfer of power and requested for an immediate cease-fire, repatriation with honour of the Armed Forces of Pakistan to West Pakistan and similarly the repatriation of West Pakistani civilians willing to do so to West Pakistan, the safety of all persons settled in East Pakistan since 1947 and lastly a guarantee against reprisals. He made it clear that his was a definite proposal for a peaceful transfer of power and the question of surrender of Armed Forces did not arise; they would continue the fight to the last man if the proposal was not accepted.

The President, however, did not approve the draft as he thought that it went beyond what the Governor had earlier suggested. The draft seemed to give the impression, according to the President, that the Governor was offering a political solution and repatriation of troops from East Pakistan on behalf of Pakistan, which virtually

meant the acceptance of an independent East Pakistan. The President believed that the existing situation in East Pakistan required a limited action by the Governor to end hostilities. The President, therefore suggested a new draft which deleted all mention of a political solution and amounted to a cease-fire, end of hostilities and a Guarantee from the UN for peace and tranquillity and against reprisals. The tone of the President's draft clearly showed that he did not understand the realities of the situation prevailing in East Pakistan. In this way, yet another and perhaps the last chance of retrieving the situation and also of avoiding the ignominy of surrender was allowed to slip.

Meanwhile, the incident connected with Major General Rao Farman Ali, Adviser to the Governor had taken place. What really transpired could be ascertained only from Governor Malik and Farman Ali who at the time of writing are kept prisoners in Bangladesh and India respectively. The conjecture is that the Governor on the assumption that the President would approve his proposal gave a copy of it to General Farman Ali. And the latter on the same assumption, passed it on to Mr. Paul Marc Henry, the representative of the UN Secretary-General in Dacca. The latter referred the matter immediately to the UN Secretariat in New-York. The UN Secretary General in turn considered it so important that he at once informed the President of the Security Council.

It was also believed in New York at that time that Farman Ali had requested the Soviet, British, French and US representatives in Dacca to take over control of Dacca and East Pakistan. Farman Ali was also reported to have desired that the Chinese delegation in New York be informed of the offer and asked to participate with the other four powers in the takeover. Farman Ali's alleged offer had an extremely adverse impact on Pakistan's position at the UN. It made it abundantly clear that Pakistan could not sustain the military confrontation any longer and that India had virtually achieved its primary military objective—the conquest of East Pakistan. The effect on all the concerned delegations was instantaneous. The friendly delegations were stunned and Pakistan's case was practically lost. Even the later brilliant pleading and lobbying of Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who arrived in New York about the same time to lead the Pakistan delegation at the UN, could not repair the damage that had been done.

President Yahya Khan discovered what had happened as a result of the apparent misunderstanding in Dacca, and promptly countermanded Farman Ali's offer and substituted for it his own proposal to the Governor, outlined earlier. General Farman Ali was naturally most perturbed by the adverse publicity he had received. He requested the President and the COS Army for measures to redeem his honour. He explained that the Governor's proposals had been fully agreed to by Generals Niazi, Jamshed and Admiral Sharif. His name had been brought into disrepute internationally without any cause. How could he, in his position without command over a single person, arrange affairs involving the Armed Forces and political settlement. He requested that either he should be allowed to issue a statement or face a Court Martial to vindicate his honour.

This incident had already indicated to the world that Pakistan had lost the war. Lieut-General Niazi, who had lost the war in his mind by December 6, had by December 10, given up all hope of any help from outside. Instead of making efforts to keep the war going as long as possible and retrieving the situation, all his attention was focussed on getting a cease-fire. The troops still had a lot of fight left in them, and properly directed and used, would still have risen to the occasion. But no one in Dacca seemed to bother about formations in the field. General Yahya in Rawalpindi was still striving for a cease-fire through the UN on his terms—a simple cease-fire without any political settlement for a transfer of power. And he and his COS Army were desperately trying to keep Niazi going to gain time. The farce of China's activities was still kept alive to infuse hope in the Eastern Command. Niazi had perhaps at this stage stopped believing it but the news had trickled down to commanders in the field. At least at one place, Pakistani troops had to suffer seriously on account of this misunderstanding.

At 1130 hours on December 11, the Indians landed heliborne troops in the south of Narsingdi to block 27 Brigade and HQ 14 Division and stop them falling back to Dacca. At the same time, Indian para-brigade started landing at Tangail north of Dacca. While the latter drop was going on, 93 *ad hoc* Brigade was passing through the area on their way to Dacca from Mymensingh. Pakistani troops engaged them. The story is that the Brigade Commander —Brigadier Abdul Qadir—mistook them as the expected friends and rushed around to stop his troops firing on them. When he

advanced to meet the 'friends' he was soon taken prisoner and became the first Brigadier to fall into the hands of the enemy. Only 900 all ranks from this *ad hoc* brigade of two battalions managed to reach Dacca later. In the meantime, it was reported that the USA had ordered 7th Fleet to move towards the Bay of Bengal. The news of this move and the adverse Indian propaganda about it again raised hopes in East Pakistan. These, however, did not last long as Admiral Sharif advised the Eastern Command that if the Fleet had been coming to help them, it would have established contact with his headquarters by now.

On December 12 at about ten in the morning the CGS sent a telephone message in Pushto informing Niazi that friends (the words used were yellow nation and white nation) were coming from north and south by mid-day on December 13. The next day a message from GHQ indicated that the friends would be delayed by 48 hours.

The events in East Pakistan were moving at breakneck speed. The Indians were advancing on Dacca from the north, the northeast, the east and the southeast. The command in Dacca was completely paralysed; the continuous Indian air attacks on Dacca and the area around it were making it more confused. Still, there seemed to be no realization of the realities of the situation in Rawalpindi. There seemed to be no coordination between the efforts made by the Pakistan delegation at the UN and the situation in East Pakistan. The proceedings of the Security Council on December 12 had made it clear that the hope entertained by President Yahya Khan for a simple cease-fire without a political settlement for a transfer of power was unrealistic in view of the Indians being poised for victory, in the battle for Dacca and the Soviet determination to oppose any settlement which would deny the Indians the fruits of the impending victory.

On December 13, the Eastern Command sent a distress signal to GHQ, the contents of which are not known. However, the COS Army in his reply indicated that the UN Security Council in session was most likely to order a cease-fire and it was a matter of hours. The Indians were doing all they could to capture Dacca and form 'Bangladesh' government before cease-fire resolution could be passed. He urged the necessity to hold out till UN resolution was passed. But Gneneral Niazi was now beyond any exhortation.

In the morning on December 14, amidst intense enemy air activity on and around Dacca, the Governor sent a message to the President about the futility of any further operations. At about mid-day six enemy fighters rocketed the Governor's House when he was holding a meeting. The main hall was destroyed but no loss of life was reported. The Governor and his cabinet resigned, disassociated themselves from further actions of Yahya Khan's Government and sought the protection of the Red Cross in Hotel Intercontinental. It was only now that the grim reality of the situation in East Pakistan dawned on Yahya Khan but the realiz,-tion came too late. At 1332 hours the same day the President sent a signal in clear to the Governor and Lieut-General Niazi referring to the Governor's flash message to him: 'You have fought a heroic battle against overwhelming odds. The nation is proud of you and the world full of admiration. I have done all that is humanly possible to find an acceptable solution to the problem. You have now reached a stage where further resistance is no longer humanly possible nor will it serve any useful purpose. It will only lead to further loss of life and destruction. You should now take all necessary measures to stop the fighting and preserve the lives of all armed forces personnel, all those from West Pakistan and all loyal elements. Meanwhile I have moved the UN to urge India to stop hostilities in East Pakistan forthwith and to gurarantee the safety of the forces and all other people who may be the likely target of miscreants.'

General Niazi immediately met the American Consul-General in Dacca and handed over a note to him in which he requested the Consul-General to arrange immediate cease-fire in order to save innocent lives. The conditions suggested in the note were four. Firstly the regrouping of Pakistani Armed Forces by mutual agreement in designated areas, secondly the safety of all military and para-military forces, and thirdly the safety of all those who had settled in East Pakistan since 1947. The fourth condition was that there should be no reprisals against those who had helped the administration since March 1971. At the end of the note Niazi promised to abide by the UN resolutions. This cease-fire message of General Niazi was soon carried in news flashes all over the world. Niazi also sent a copy of the proposals to the President on December 15. According to foreign press reports at that time, the Indians demanded an unconditional surrender. On December 15, Governor Malik and General Farman Ali sent a message to the

UN Secretariat that Pakistan Government was desirous of ending hostilities in East Pakistan and wished a few hours cease-fire for discussion of conditions. The Indians, having intercepted the message, were jubilant and stepped up their air attacks so that Niazi or any one else for him may not change his mind. Eight 500 lbs bombs were dropped on Niazi's command post in Dacca cantonment and the new site selected for the Eastern Command in Dacca town was bombed even before the Headquarters had started shifting there. Late at night on December 15, the COS Army sent a signal to Niazi in which he referred to the latter's signal to the President about cease-fire and the COS Indian Army's reply to Niazi, broadcast by All India Radio. He suggested that the terms laid down by the COS Indian Army might be accepted as they appeared to meet Niazi's requirements. This would be merely a local military decision with no bearing on the political outcome.

The impending surrender of Pakistani forces had its effect on the diplomatic scene. It became apparent that there was no possibility of obtaining a resolution from the Security Council to safeguard Pakistan's territorial integrity and compel Indian acceptance. On the contrary the endless consultations among the members of the Security Council tended to give further concession to the Soviet Union and India.

The only move to retrieve Pakistan's self-respect in the diplomatic and moral spheres and to save Pakistan from further humiliation at the UN was made by Mr. Bhutto. He requested for an urgent meeting of the Security Council, which was convened at less than half an hour's notice. Mr. Bhutto addressed it and said: "Perhaps this will be my last speech in the Security Council. I have not come here to accept abject surrender. If the Security Council wants me to be a party to the legalising of abject surrender then I say that under no circumstances shall I be. I will not take back a document of surrender from the Security Council. I will not be a party to the legalisation of aggression."

"For four days the Security Council has procrastinated. Why? Because the object was for Dacca to fall....Why should I waste my time here in the Security Council? I will not be a party to the ignominious surrender of a part of my country. You can take your Security Council. Here you are, I am going."

After delivering his famous speech, Mr. Bhutto walked out of the Security Council Chamber. The courageous and defiant gesture was applauded by the delegates of all small countries and even by a large section of the hostile press.

From all the evidence available, General Niazi kept the surrender negotiations to himself. The troops in the field and even most of the officers in his headquarters did not have any inkling of the messages being exchanged between him and the President and the arrangements being made by him for a cease-fire. The discipline of the forces was still intact, their morale was unshaken. The troops present in Dacca which were mostly service troops, were keenly preparing to fight the battle for Dacca. HQ 14 Division and 27 Brigade in Bhairab Bazar had earlier asked to attack the Indian troops para-dropped behind them and come towards Dacca to help in defending it. The attack was disallowed. Even service corps were volunteering for fighting. Colonel Shah the workshop commander, had reported that his officers and men were prepared to fight till the last. Colonel Lodhi, GSO-1 Operations was advising everyone that they should fight to the last man and be killed rather than surrender. He maintained that such an action would serve as an example to our future generations. The Razakars were offering their services in the defence of Dacca, where there had been no incidents since the war had started. Their spirits were high and when at 8 p.m. on December 15, the BBC announced the news that on General Niazi's request, India had agreed to a cease-fire from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. next day for holding surrender negotiations, it caused confusion in the Eastern Command Headquarters. Some people believed that it was another lie broadcast by the BBC as no one could imagine that a surrender was being contemplated.

In all this confusion and commotion, someone in the Eastern Command Headquarters had remembered the gallant 4 Army Aviation Squadron and ordered them to leave East Pakistan at night on December 15. This small squadron of eight helicopters (4 MI-8 and 4 Alouettes) under Lieut-Colonel Liaquat Bokhari, had been in action without break since late March 1971. In the first ten days after the military action, they were the only channel of communication among various garrison towns of East Pakistan. They were used to carry critical supplies of ammunition to beleaguered garrisons, and to transport special troops, commanders

and vacating families. They had participated in almost all the battles against the rebels to carry troops and supplies to focal points. When the Indian air became active, they continued their flights by night. This was hazardous as whatever navigational aids they had, could not be used due to the absence of similar facilities on the ground. But they never faltered. During these long and sustained duties, they lost only one MI-8 which crashed while flying by night. The remaining seven with their gallant pilots and crews escaped to Burma and arrived in West Pakistan safely.

At 3 in the morning on December 16, General Niazi had the orders for a cease-fire, withdrawal of troops to specified assembly areas, and preparation for surrender, conveyed to all concerned. After a laudatory remark the message told the troops that they had reached a stage where further resistance was not humanly possible. It would not therefore, serve any useful purpose but would lead to further loss of life and destruction. The remainder of the message contained the assurances given to General Niazi by the COS Indian Army which included a guarantee against any reprisals by any one under his command including the Mukti Bahini and the hope that arms would be laid down in a disciplined manner. The formations and the units in the field were making the best of a hopeless situation and were putting up a brave fight before the news of surrender reached them. On receipt of the message of surrender the officers and jawans felt disgraced and angry. A number of them vowed that they would see that those who brought that humiliation upon the army were duly punished. A gallant tribute to the spirit of the troops is that they still fought so long despite the lack of reinforcements, supplies, heavy weapons and air cover against the overwhelming superiority of the enemy. In a most desperate situation they still continued fighting till the end without losing their discipline and morale. With determined leadership at their head, even at that late stage, they could have still carried on for another few weeks. If they had been allowed to continue fighting, the history of Pakistan would have been different.

After issuing the surrender message General Niazi left the command post followed by his COS. At 8.30 a.m. he contacted the Indian authorities through the American Military Attache and at mid-day Indian jeeps started entering Dacca. East Pakistan had been surrendered. One of the senior staff officers of the Eastern

Command remarked: 'If the resources available had been properly employed and the advantage of the terrain had been fully utilised, Dacca could have held on for six to eight weeks. The sudden collapse may be attributed to the inefficiency and irresolution of the commander.'

Then followed the most humiliating surrender ceremony with all the fanfare that the Indians could produce at short notice. Pakistan was humiliated in the person of General Niazi on Paltan Maidan, where on many previous occasions people had vowed to safeguard the integrity of Pakistan. The people of East Pakistan again stood there in thousands. An insane frenzy had gripped the crowds and the air was filled with loud maniac laughter but many quietly wept. The Indians were jubilant at the end of a struggle which had lasted over almost a quarter of a century. It was an Indian show and the Mukti Bahini was not allowed near the stage. It was let loose instead, to quench its mad lust for vengeance. Personal vendettas were soon settled. People were dragged from their houses and killed outright. All of them who might in future raise a voice for Pakistan were liquidated. The word compatriot became synonymous with death. In full view of thousands of spectators, uniform-clad Bengali guerrillas with their short bayonets gleefully extinguished life. The foreign press stood and took pictures of the gory record for history to know and learn.

CHAPTER XIII

WAR IN THE WEST

AS explained in an earlier chapter, the information of the Indian invasion of East Pakistan in the morning on November 21, evoked no reaction from General Yahya Khan and no orders were, therefore, issued to the defence forces, which were ready in their battle positions to start operations. The counter action from West Pakistan was imperative and looked feasible considering the quantum of troops facing each other along West Pakistan borders and the existing environment. Time was the governing factor. Instead, efforts were made to play down the Indian invasion, and life ran normally in West Pakistan. It was known that the troops in East Pakistan could not fight back a war of aggression against Pakistan on their own. The war had been planned to be fought as a whole in which the part of troops in East Pakistan was, in fact, limited. Following the dictates of Pakistan's strategy there was no way out but to counter-attack from the West. This decision could not be delayed as the Eastern Command could not be expected to remain a force in being for an indefinite period.

India had committed aggression in March 1971 when she allowed its Border Security Forces supported by regular troops in

strength to walk into East Pakistan. This posture of aggression had continued. She had allowed a rebel government to be formed in Calcutta. She had been training, equipping and paying the rebels. The overall command and control of the rebels was held by the Indians. In fact, the Mukti Bahini was just an integral part of the Indian Army. Since September 1971, India had been, by degrees, escalating the war along East Pakistan border. On November 21, it had launched an offensive into East Pakistan and had entered Pakistan's territory in considerable force. Pakistan would have been within its legal rights to counter-attack India in self-defence at any time since March 1971. There was no way to save Pakistan and its honour except by standing up and fighting it out, and that too immediately. Strangely, Yahya Khan and his advisers were still striving to play down the situation.

However, from November 22, pressure started building up from civil quarters as well as from the armed forces. The first immediate reaction of the people and the leaders was an appeal for unity and the need to mobilise the nation on war footing. Mr. Nurul Amin a highly respected East Pakistani leader said: 'Notwithstanding which part of the country is in danger of attack or aggressed, the entire nation should stand united to face the enemy.' Similar sentiments were voiced by the leaders of other parties. The Bengali leaders, at that time in West Pakistan, were openly accusing Yahya Khan of pacificism. The independent press was urging Yahya Khan to act quickly. Military wives in at least one cantonment, Multan, threatened to send bangles and hinna to the President and the COS Army. One Corps Commander had walked into the office of the COS Army and had said: 'Do you know what the officers and jawans are saying about you? They feel that you are funking.'

The government was justifiably now under military, political and psychological pressure to take a decision on the attack from the West to divert India's attention from East Pakistan.

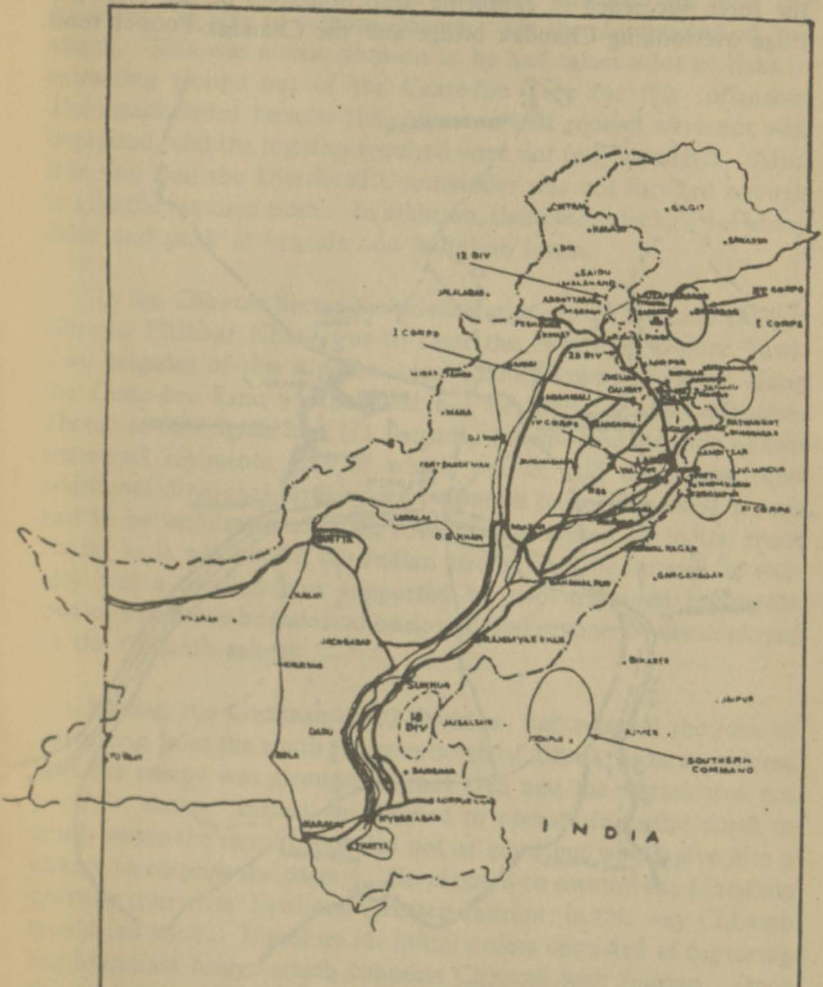
The GHQ officers, whenever opportunities offered, pressed the COS, Army and the President himself, to take a decision on retaliating from West Pakistan. In order to facilitate decision making, although belatedly, a time table of this counter-offensive was made on 'M' Day basis and was presented to the President and the COS by the DMO on November 29. It contained in detail the time table

for the preliminary operations by the holding formations and the launching of a counter-offensive. As usual, both of them listened patiently but would not agree to the time table. Officers at the GHQ, however, continued pressing the COS and at last on November 30 a 'green signal' was given and December 3, was selected as the day of starting operations from the West. It was 13 days after the Indian invasion of East Pakistan. By that time the opportunity had slipped by and time and tide had refused to wait for the Pakistani leaders.

As brought out in the chapter on Defence Plans, the Pakistani plan in West Pakistan had two main ingredients; preliminary operations by the holding formations with limited objectives, followed by a counter-offensive. The first part of the plan started at about dusk on December 3, preceded by the Air strike described in the chapter 'PAF in War'.

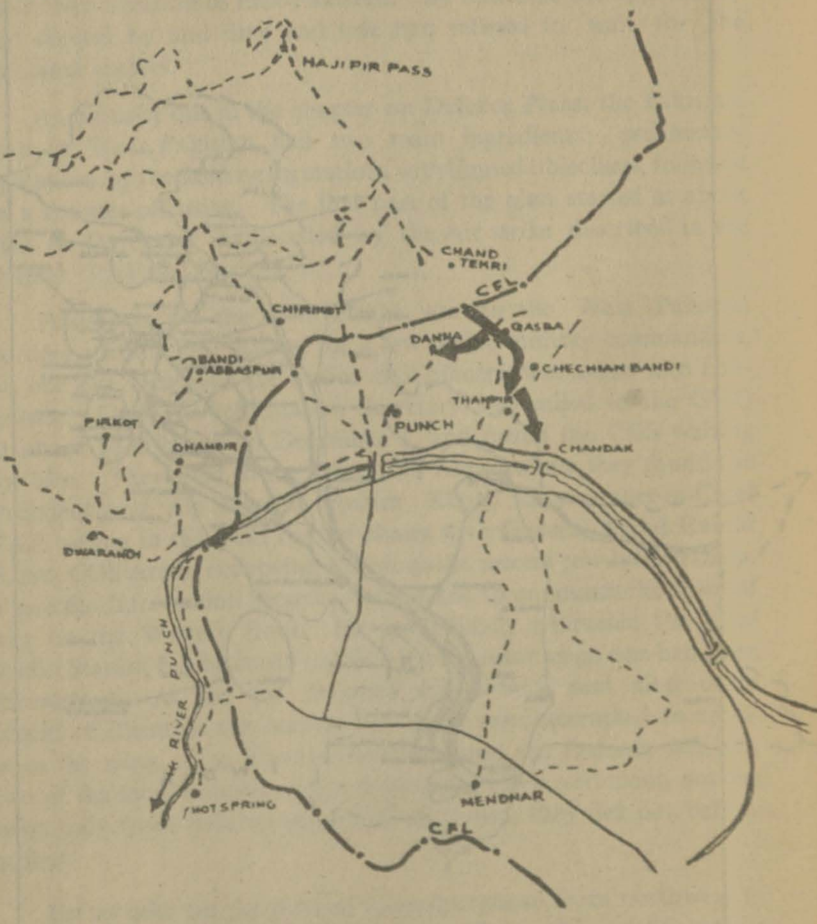
Pakistanis got the news of the war on the West Pakistan borders a little late. Except for a few senior military commanders, no one else, not even the senior civil officers, was taken into confidence. Only the Information Secretary was called to the GHQ at about 1630 hours on December 3, and found the CGS waiting for him. They went to the Operation Room where they found the President and Air Marshal Rahim Khan, Commander-in-Chief PAF sitting in the front row of chairs with General Abdul Hamid Khan, COS Army, occupying a chair in the second row behind them. There the Information Secretary was asked to announce the news of war on the Western front. He immediately contacted the local Radio Station but he could not find the Director as no one had been forewarned. At last the Director was located and after usual checks of identities the normal broadcast was interrupted to announce the news. The Foreign Secretary and the Defence Adviser, two of the most important functionaries of the government, got the news only from their wives, which of course, they did not believe at first.

Let us take the progress of these operations from northwest to southwest. The attack of 12 Division (Major General M. Akbar Khan) to capture Poonch was planned at the expense of milking certain important sectors, notably Lipa valley, which later caused problems. However, it was based on a bold concept in which a number of risks were taken. Nevertheless it had most of the ingredients of success. 12 Division had been able to concentrate



WESTERN THEATRE OF WAR

a superior force around Poonch. Two Infantry Brigades—26 Brigade and 2 AK Brigade with one additional battalion each took part in this operation. Thirteen artillery batteries were concentrated to support the attack. Initially, the operation went well and the force succeeded in capturing deep objectives at the Than Pir ridge overlooking Chandak bridge and the Chandak-Poonch road.



POONCH OPERATION

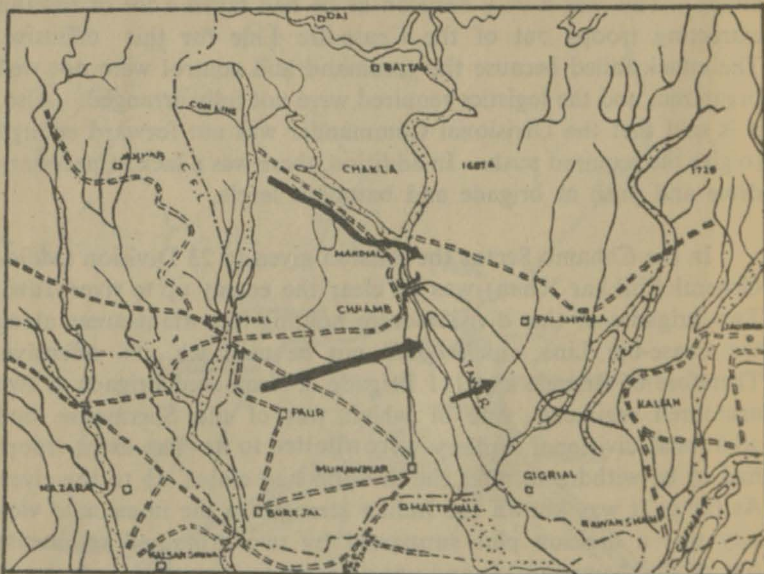
The extreme limit reached by the attacking troops was two to three miles northeast of Punch where they were stopped by strong enemy fortifications. It seems that the strength of the fortifications came as a surprise to the attacking troops. All the initial objectives, except Danna and Karim ridge, were captured after heavy casualties.

The Indians, however, had kept on occupying well prepared counter-penetration positions along the main ridge leading to Poonch and they were still holding the Cease-fire Line north of the advancing troops which threatened their lines of communications. By December 5, the Divisional Commander had realized that he would not be able to capture Poonch. He therefore called off the attack. This was a wise decision as he had taken a lot of risks in extracting troops out of the Cease-fire Line for this offensive. The attack failed because the command and control were not well organized, and the logistics required were not fully arranged. Also, it is said that the Divisional Commander was not forward enough to give the required push. In addition, there was a lack of necessary drive and push at brigade and battalion levels.

In the Chhamb Sector the mission given to 23 Division (Major General Eftikhar Khan) was to clear the enemy up to river Tawi. Two brigades of this division were holding important areas along the Cease-fire Line which could not be used for its offensive. Therefore 66 Brigade and 111 Brigade, 2 Armoured Brigade of two armoured regiments, one of which was of old Shermans, and additional divisional artillery were allotted to it. The extra troops had to be withdrawn after the division had closed up to the river. As far as it was known the Indian strength in the immediate vicinity was a division plus supported by two armoured regiments, out of which one brigade and one armoured regiment were deployed in the Chhamb salient.

Earlier, the Commander 23 Division, had rejected the idea of advancing from the south *i.e* from north of Tanda, as he considered that the enemy was stronger in that area and the terrain was not good for tanks. Instead he planned to operate from the north to south where the terrain was also not as good but would give him a chance to surprise the enemy. He planned to capture the Mandiala crossing over river Tawi and threaten Jaurian; in this way Chhamb would fall itself. Therefore his initial orders consisted of capturing the Mandiala bridge which connects Chhamb with Jaurian. Once this was done, closing up to the river Tawi could be done without opposition. 66 and 111 Brigades were to form firm bases a couple of miles forward within the salient before 11 Cavalry with a battalion could advance towards Mandiala. The operation started at about midnight on December 3. 66 Brigade succeeded in forming the firm base but 111 Brigade came across heavy opposition and

could only advance up to 200 yards into the enemy territory. The enemy resisted fiercely. However on December 4, 11 Cavalry group succeeded in securing the home side of the river bank in this area by the evening, but they found the bridge demolished.



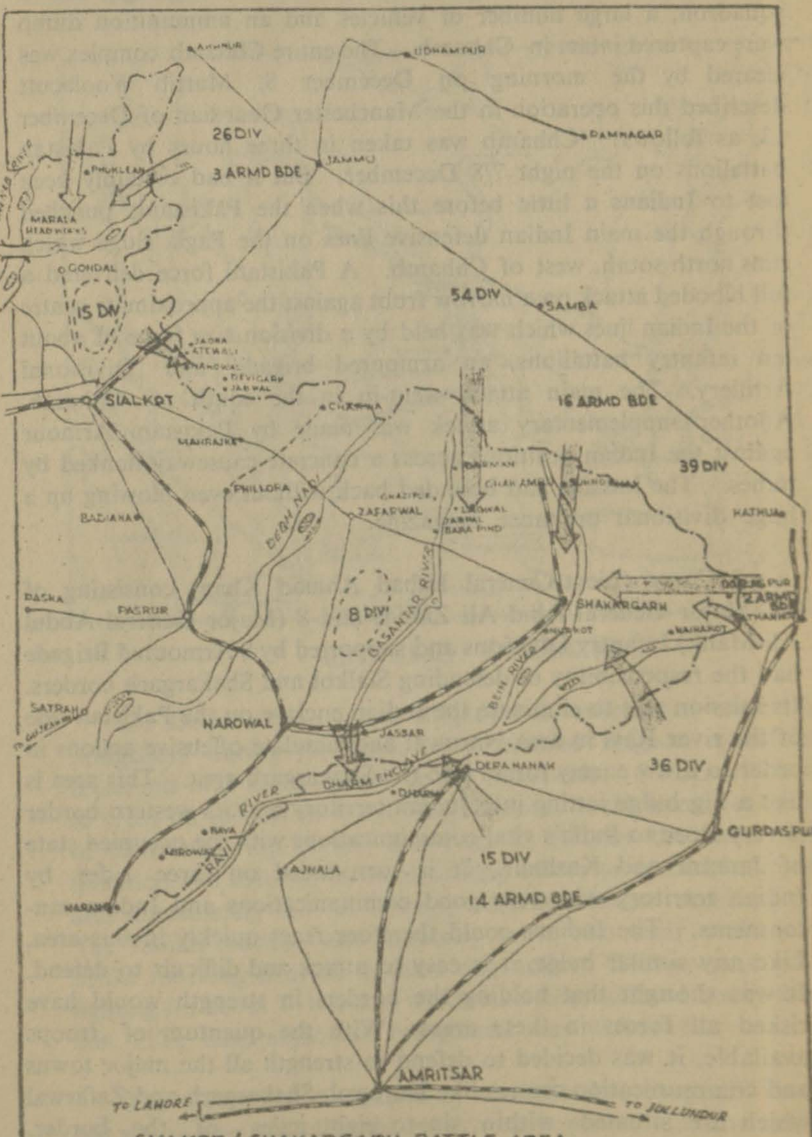
CHHAMB OPERATION

On December 5, 4 AK Brigade was ordered to establish a bridgehead during the night. 2 Armoured Brigade would then break out next morning and go for Palanwala. 6 AK, which was to cross on the left of 4 AK Brigade front could hardly move out of its forming up place. However, 13 AK by the sheer determination and drive of its commanding officer succeeded in crossing and immediately hit the strongly defended Indian Artillery area. The Indian reaction was extremely swift with their artillery and in the morning their air became very active. There was confused fighting for about 24 hours in which both sides suffered heavy casualties. The next night the bridgehead was withdrawn.

The Divisional Commander was not discouraged. He was not a man who would let the enemy rest in peace. On the morning of December 6, he decided to pull back infantry and armour and after regrouping his forces manoeuvred around the enemy positions

on both sides and struck between Chhamb and Munawwar and reached Tawi. This manoeuvre succeeded in crushing the enemy defences and after a lightning action, reached its objective on the river bank. The Indians pulled back over the river in a hurry. Munawwar and Chhamb were occupied. Tanks enough for a squadron, a large number of vehicles and an ammunition dump were captured intact in Chhamb. The entire Chhamb complex was cleared by the morning on December 8. Martin Woolacott described this operation in the Manchester Guardian of December 13, as follows: 'Chhamb was taken in three hours by Pakistan battalions on the night 7/8 December. But it had certainly been lost to Indians a little before this when the Pakistanis punched through the main Indian defensive lines on the Pagla ridge which runs north south, west of Chhamb. A Pakistani force delivered a full blooded attack on a narrow front against the approximate centre of the Indian lines which was held by a division size force of about ten infantry battalions, an armoured brigade and Divisional Artillery. The main attack went-in in the south of Chhamb. Another supplementary attack was made by Pakistani Armour against the Indian positions across a concrete causeway flanked by mines. The Indians had bounded back without even blowing up a huge divisional ordnance magazine.

I Corps (Lieut-General Irshad Ahmad Khan) consisting of 15 (Major General Abid Ali Zahid) and 8 (Major General Abdul Ali Malik) Infantry Divisions and supported by 8 Armoured Brigade had the responsibility of defending Sialkot and Shakargarh borders. Its mission was to eliminate the Indian enclave on the Pakistan side of the river Ravi in area Narowal and simulate offensive actions in order to draw enemy forces into the Shakargarh area. This area is like a big bulge jutting into Indian territory and its western border is very close to India's vital communications with the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is surrounded on three sides by Indian territory with very good communications and Indian cantonments. The Indians could therefore react quickly in this area. Like any similar bulge, it is easy to attack and difficult to defend. It was thought that holding the borders in strength would have risked all forces in these areas. With the quantum of troops available, it was decided to defend in strength all the major towns and communication centres like Narowal, Shakargarh and Zafarwal which are situated within six to eight miles of the border. While 15 Division was to look after the Sialkot borders, 8 Division



SIALKOT / SHAKARGARH BATTLE AREA

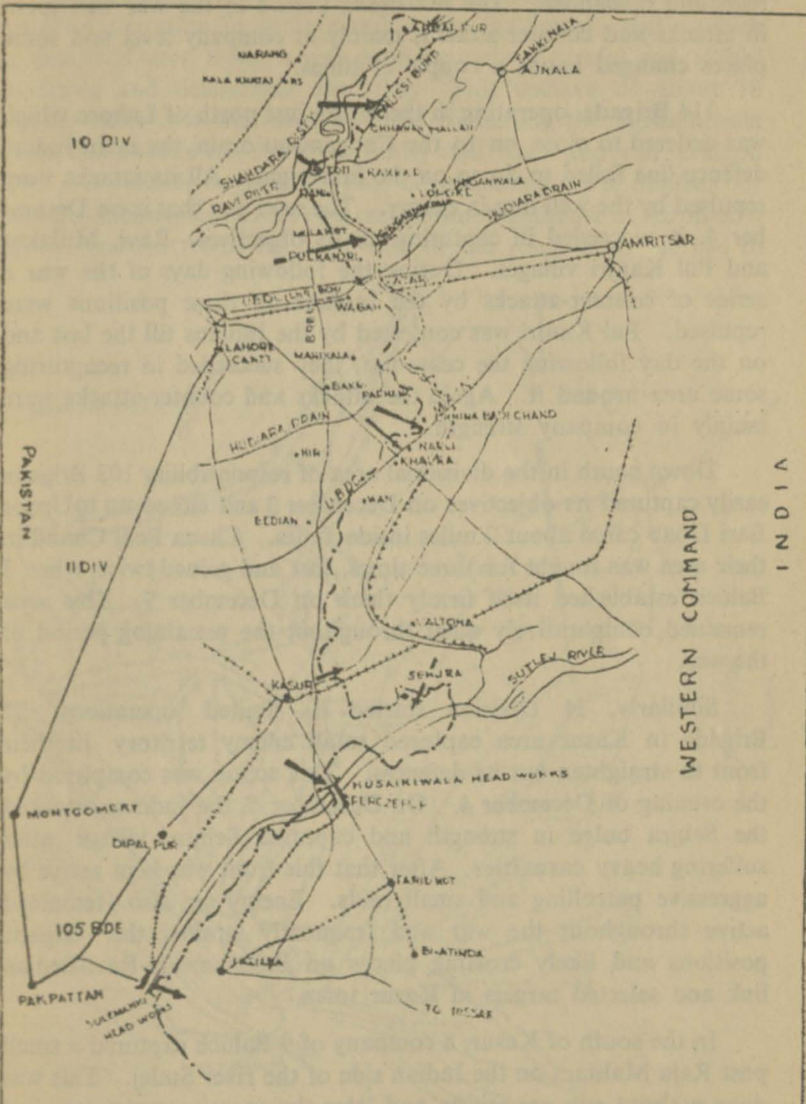
was given the responsibility of carrying out the Corps plan in Shakargarh bulge.

On the night of December 3, 8 Division cleared Dharm enclave without any difficulty as the attack seemed to have come as a complete surprise to the defenders. The Indians later countered this action by occupying a small Pakistani enclave on their side of the river Ravi. Throughout the remaining period of the war, Pakistani troops neither attempted to cross the river nor used any artillery fire in this area. The reason was that Dera Baba Nanak, a Sikh holy place is situated in the immediate vicinity. The Indian troops also remained inactive except for blowing up their side of the railway bridge. The front was however kept active by the Indian Western Command passing fictitious messages to Delhi containing stories of routing Pakistani troops in big battles. The Indian Brigade Commander in the area—Brigadier Gauri Shanker—was later awarded a gallantry award—Maha Veer Chakra—to give authenticity to the farce.

Serious fighting in Shakargarh bulge only started in the evening of December 5. The Indian plan, as later reconstructed from certain captured orders and interrogation of prisoners, was as follows. The Indian 1 Corps was to capture Tanda, Marala, Sialkot, Pasrur and Narowal. After that it had to advance up to the Marala-Ravi link and attempt to break out from this area towards Wazirabad and from Tanda towards Gujrat. The Indian offensive to achieve these objectives started on a wide front on December 5. A brigade column from 10 Indian Division advanced into the narrow Phuklian bulge from the east and the north towards Marala Headworks and the main attack was launched in the Shakargarh bulge from north to south between Bein river and Degh Nadi. It was spearheaded by two armoured regiments and two infantry brigades with adequate air support and artillery fire. 54 Indian Division from Samba was leading the attack. As the battle raged and developed, one more infantry brigade and an armoured regiment were soon pushed into this offensive. Along with this attack, Indian 36 Division launched small probing attacks from the east into the mouth of the bulge between Nainakot and Ikhlaspur. Later another infantry brigade from 39 Indian Division advanced from the direction of Kathua. The Indians were advancing into the areas where they came across the least opposition. An East Pakistani Brigade Major of a brigade in 8 Division had defected just before the hostilities started and it

was surmised that he must have given to the Indians detailed dispositions of troops in this area. The Pakistani covering troops consisting of 20 Lancers, and some elements of a Reconnaissance and Support Battalion (R&S) fought back delaying the enemy advance. By the evening of December 6, they had fallen back behind the protective minefield of the advanced position. On December 9, the Indians opened still another front in this area from the direction of their enclave across the river Ravi in the east. 36 Indian Infantry Division with 2 Indian Armoured Brigade, started advancing on the axis Gurdaspur-Nainakot and Gurdaspur-Ikhlaspur towards Shakargarh with intense air and artillery fire support. Pakistani infantry and R&S elements in this area fell back to their intermediate position under heavy pressure. In the meantime, 15 Division was keeping the enemy contained on the Sialkot borders by small local attacks along the borders. It had, however, lost Phuklian salient to the enemy, which was unforgivable. The division had not used its imagination and had slavishly interpreted the GHQ instructions to hold Marala Headworks by not less than a battalion. It had allowed only the Rangers to operate in forward areas, for which they had no capability.

IV Corps (Lieut-General Bahadur Sher) was also a holding formation with its areas of responsibility extending from Maqboolpur —23 miles northwest of Lahore city to a point on the border southeast of Bahawalpur. It was given the task of limited offensive action—to seize features of tactical importance to improve its defensive posture. At dusk on December 3, both 10 (Major General S.A.Z. Naqvi) and 11 (Major General Abdul Majid) Divisions of the Corps started their attacks in Lahore and Kasur Sector respectively and 105 Brigade group (Brigadier, later Major General Amir Hamza) in Sulaimanke. This Corps had no reserves either on the Corps or on the Divisional level. Its Armoured Regiments had been withdrawn for operations elsewhere. 10 Division on the northern flank took three nights to straighten out all the bulges within the areas of its responsibility, which extended to about 120,000 yards. Its area of operations was heavily mined by the Indians and the troops came across stiff resistance. 88 Brigade in the north of the river Ravi captured all their objectives along the well fortified Dhussi Bund (embankment) and occupied the Toti enclave during the night on December 3/4. 5 East Bengal Regiment put in a determined attack on their objectives and the Indian



IV CORPS BATTLE

15 Maratha Light Infantry facing them bolted after some resistance. The next day 175 men of 5 EB defected to the Indians with their weapons and the remainder of the battalion was withdrawn to the rear, and disbanded. The remaining period of the war was spent in attacks and counter-attacks, mainly at company level and some places changed hands a couple of times.

114 Brigade, operating in the centre just north of Lahore which was ordered to close on to the Chuganwan drain, the main Indian defence line failed to do so on the first night. All its attacks were repulsed by the well dug-in enemy. The next day that is on December 4, it succeeded in capturing all its objectives—Ravi, Mulakot and Pul Kanjri villages. During the following days of the war a series of counter-attacks by the Indians on these positions were repulsed. Pul Kanjri was contested by the Indians till the last and on the day following the cease-fire, they succeeded in recapturing some area around it. Again the attacks and counter-attacks were mainly in company strength.

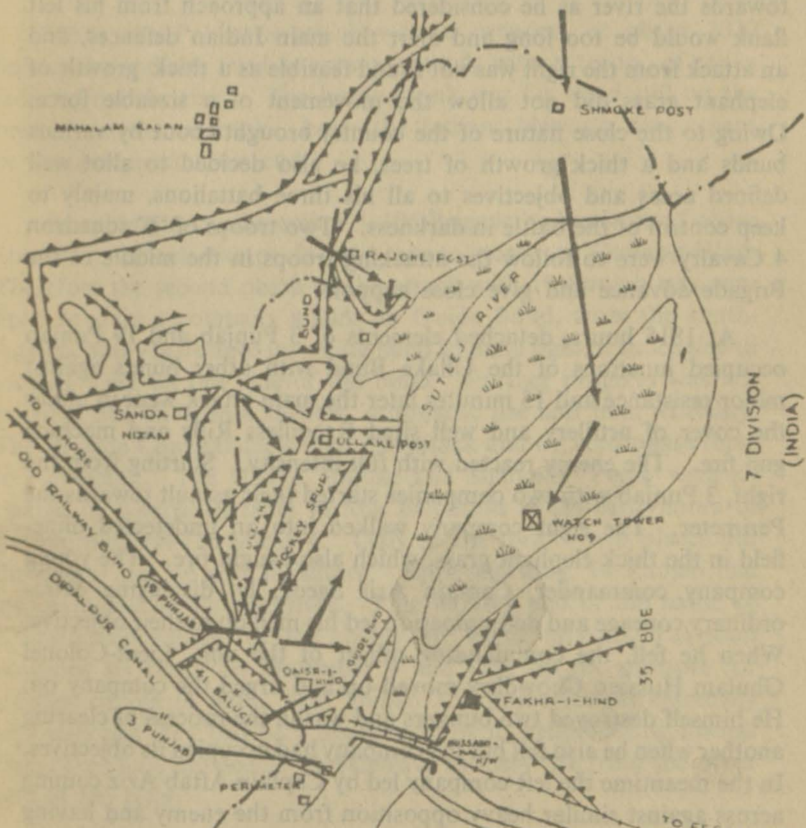
Down south in the divisional area of responsibility 103 Brigade easily captured its objectives on December 3 and closed up toUpper Bari Doab canal about 2 miles inside India. Chena Bedi Chand in their area was fought for three times, lost and gained twice, when 3 Baluch established itself firmly there on December 7. This area remained comparatively quiet throughout the remaining period of the war.

Similarly, 11 Division started its limited operations. 52 Brigade in Kasur area captured small enemy territory in their front to straighten out its defences. This action was completed by the evening of December 4. On December 5, the Indians attacked the Sehjra bulge in strength and captured Sehjra village after suffering heavy casualties. After that this front was kept active by aggressive patrolling and small raids. Enemy air also remained active throughout the war and frequently straffed the brigade positions and likely crossing places on Bahmanwala-Ravi-Bedian link and selected targets in Kasur town.

In the south of Kasur, a company of 9 Baluch captured a small post Raja Mahtam on the Indian side of the river Sutlej. This was done without any opposition and later the enemy counter-attacked to reoccupy it, but the attack was repulsed. As the river water was rising the Baluch company was ordered to withdraw to the home side of the river. While doing so it was attacked by the Indians but

succeeded in reaching the home side. A minor enemy effort at crossing the river was repulsed.

But the elimination of the Hussainiwala enclave by 106 Brigade deserves narration in some detail. Like Sulaimanki battle which is described later, it was a very good example of careful and skilful planning and determined execution. This enclave of about 18 square miles is a vital area of India containing the Hussainiwala canal headworks on the river Sutlej and road and rail bridges. The area, which is generally flat, is intersected by a number of bunds (embankments) and two creeks running almost in the middle of the enclave from the north-east to the south-west. It has 16



BATTLE OF HUSAINIWAL'A

villages, a fortlike Qaisar-e-Hind Memorial and a watch tower providing ideal observation posts for miles all around. The whole area was extremely well prepared for defence with pill-boxes, concrete emplacements and bunkers. Anti-tank ditches had also been dug in selected tactical places and mines and barbed wire had been extensively used. As far as it was known 35 Indian Infantry Brigade was responsible for this area and had deployed its 15 Punjab in strong points along the road and rail approaches to the river and 25 BSF on its right flank. The remaining two battalions, with a squadron of tanks, were on the Indian side of the river.

In order to achieve surprise, Commander 106 Brigade decided to launch his main attack along the road and rail approaches towards the river as he considered that an approach from his left flank would be too long and alert the main Indian defences, and an attack from the right was not found feasible as a thick growth of elephant grass did not allow the movement of a sizeable force. Owing to the close nature of the country brought about by various bunds and a thick growth of trees, he also decided to allot well defined areas and objectives to all his three battalions, mainly to keep control of the battle in darkness. Two troops of 'B' squadron 4 Cavalry were to follow the attacking troops in the middle of the Brigade advance and give close support.

At 1815 hours, detached elements of 3 Punjab and 19 Punjab occupied junctions of the Ullake Bund with other bunds against minor resistance and 15 minutes later the main attack went in under the cover of artillery and well sited Recoilless Rifle and machine gun fire. The enemy reacted with full intensity. Starting from the right, 3 Punjab with two companies started their assault towards the Perimeter. The right company walked into an undetected minefield in the thick elephant grass, which also caught fire. The young company commander, Captain Arif Saeed, by displaying extraordinary courage and determination led his men on to their objective. When he fell, the commanding officer of the unit, Lieut-Colonel Ghulam Hussain Chowdhry moved up and urged the company on. He himself destroyed two bunkers and was in the process of clearing another when he also fell but the company had occupied its objectives. In the meantime the left company led by Captain Aftab Aziz coming across against similar heavy opposition from the enemy and having been engulfed by fire in the elephant grass quickly switched over the direction of attack and avoiding both hazards succeeded in occupying the mouth of the main bridge.

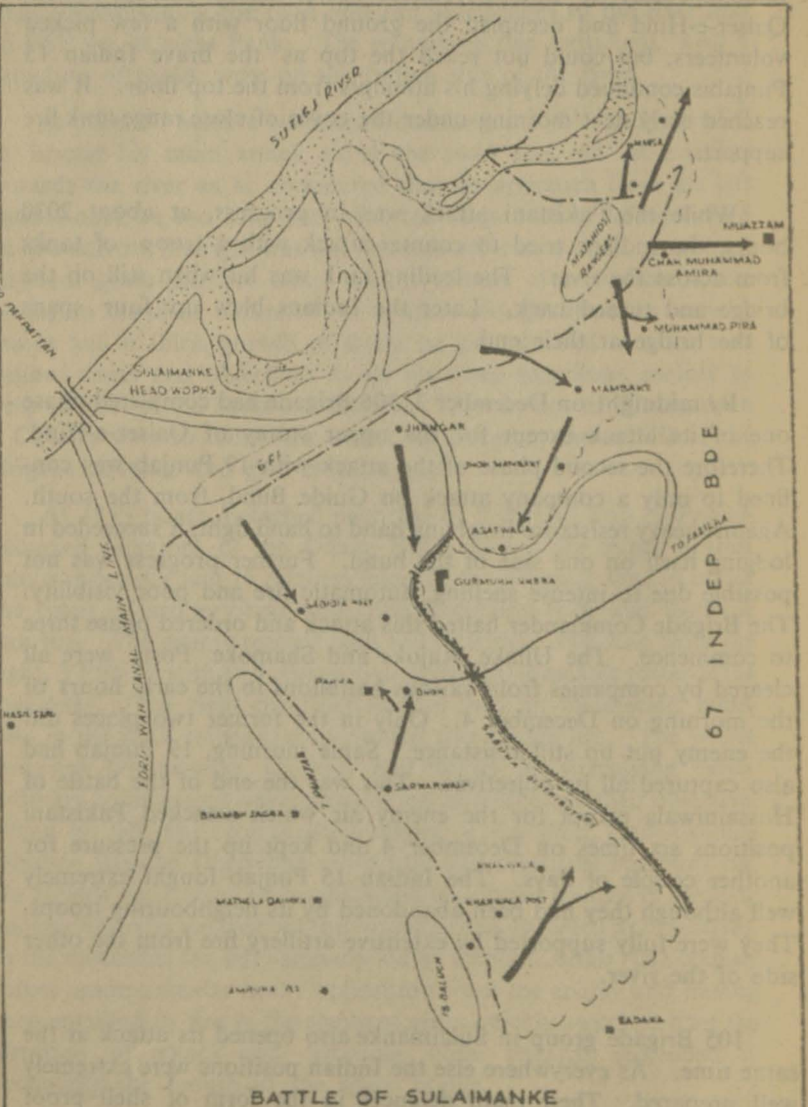
41 Baluch in the centre of the Brigade attack commenced its assault with two companies on the right bank of Dipalpur canal bund and Qaiser-e-Hind. A company under Major Mohammad Hanif in spite of extensive opposition kept the momentum of the assault. When he was killed, Subedar Mohmmad Iqbal took command immediately and personally led the company on to its objective. Simultaneously 'B' Company, under Major Zahid Yasin, assaulted Qaiser-e-Hind and occupied the ground floor with a few picked volunteers, but could not reach the top as the brave Indian 15 Punjabis continued defying his attempts from the top floor. It was reached early next morning under the cover of close range tank fire support.

While the Pakistani attack was in progress, at about 2030 hours, the Indians tried to counter-attack with a troop of tanks from across the river. The leading tank was hit when still on the bridge and turned back. Later the Indians blew up four spans of the bridge at their end.

By midnight on December 3, 106 Brigade had completed phase one of its attack except for the upper storey of Qaiser-e-Hind. Therefore the second phase of the attack with 19 Punjab was confined to only a company attack on Guide Bund, from the south. Against heavy resistance involving hand to hand fight, it succeeded in lodging itself on one side of the bund. Further progress was not possible due to intense shelling, automatic fire and poor visibility. The Brigade Commander halted this attack and ordered phase three to commence. The Ullake, Rajoke and Shamoke Posts were all cleared by companies from various battalions in the early hours of the morning on December 4. Only in the former two places did the enemy put up stiff resistance. Same morning, 19 Punjab had also captured all its objectives. This was the end of the battle of Hussainiwala except for the enemy air which attacked Pakistani positions six times on December 4 and kept up the pressure for another couple of days. The Indian 15 Punjab fought extremely well although they had been abandoned by its neighbouring troops. They were fully supported by extensive artillery fire from the other side of the river.

105 Brigade group in Sulaimanke also opened its attack at the same time. As everywhere else the Indian positions were extremely well prepared. Their main defences in the form of shell proof

bunkers were on an embankment about 15 to 20 feet high behind (eastern side) the Sabuna drain about 45 feet wide dug as an obstacle. The bridge over the drain was particularly well defended and the area around it prepared as killing ground. On the west of the drain the enemy had also constructed cleverly designed small defence complexes surrounded by water. Under the cover of diversionary



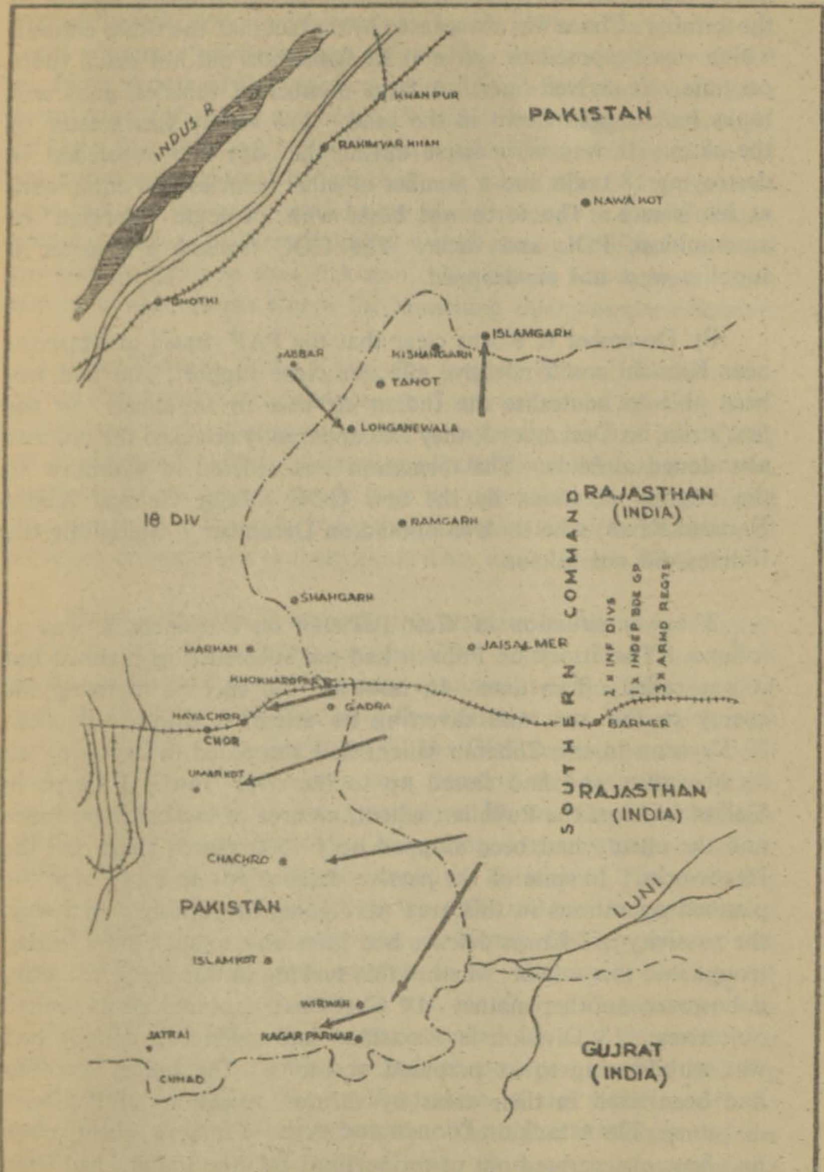
BATTLE OF SULAIMANKE

attacks by the Rangers and the Mujahids away on the left, 6 FF commenced its attack at about dusk to eliminate the main enemy defences. While the other companies of the battalion were approaching their objective its 'B' Company led by Major Shabbir Sharif advanced silently by a carefully selected route and in a surprise rush captured the bridge over the drain which was carefully prepared by the enemy for demolition. After that all hell was let loose on the company from the front and flanks. Some men jumped into the drain and swam over to the other side and in a determined rush the company was over the embankment where a fierce hand to hand fighting started. The signallers of the company dropped their sets and joined their comrades. The enemy battalion (3 Assam) after some resistance left their bunkers and ran away. Soon the company had cleared about 500 yards of the embankment and established itself after repulsing a counter-attack. Other elements of the battalion arrived and extended its hold on the embankment. After that 7 Punjab started its operations on the right of 6 FF and occupied their objectives. While doing so they ambushed the withdrawing enemy and killed 50 and captured 145. 18 Baluch, the third battalion of the Brigade which was given certain objectives still to the right was held back. However it had dominated its objectives during the night by aggressive patrolling and occupied them the next morning.

The Brigade held its newly occupied positions against daily mounting counter-attacks. The enemy seemed to be very sensitive about this area and made determined efforts to recapture the lost ground every night with fresh troops throughout the war. Most of these attacks were launched on 'B' Company's (6 FF) positions. Sikhs, Rajputs, Gurkhas, Assamis and Jats were used at different times. The most determined attack was that of 4 Jats, when, on the night of December 5, some of its elements led by Major Narayan Singh penetrated 'B' Company's (6 FF) positions on the embankment. In the ensuing hand to hand fight this brave Indian Major was killed by another extremely brave Pakistani company commander Major Shabbir Sharif. The latter himself laid down his life on his post next night. That night in another counter-attack, the Indian tanks closed up to twenty yards of 6 FF positions after having destroyed all the anti-tank guns in the area. They were only repulsed by artillery fire and 3.5 Energa grenades. During all these fiercely fought battles 6 FF and particularly its 'B' Company rose to extreme heights of bravey and skilful leadership.

The Rajasthan Sector, responsibility of 18 Division, (Major-General B.M. Mustafa) being a vast area, could be divided into three sectors for the convenience of explanation—the Northern Sector consisting of area opposite Gabbar; Central Sector—area Chor, Umarkot and Chachro and Southern Sector consisting of area Nagar Parkar and Virwah. This division was to hold the enemy in the Central Sector and Southern Sector along the 'green belt' and launch an offensive with two brigades in the Northern Sector against Ramgarh along Tanot-Longanewala approach. The offensive was originally planned for the night December 3, but was delayed by 24 hours because of logistic problems and failure to complete the preliminary moves. The task given to this division was too ambitious, as explained in chapter on Defence Plans. The Division was not prepared to fight in the desert nor was it equipped for doing so. Its transport was not suitable for movement in the desert terrain and the Logistic Area was not in a position to support it. Major General Mustafa claims that he had made this amply clear and accepted the new task only on the condition that 4 x 4 vehicles would be provided to him. The only unit which was fit for and capable of moving on sand was one tank regiment of T-59s. The other armoured regiment was of Sherman Tanks. So much so that when orders were passed by the Divisional Commander for this offensive, his artillery commander and one of the brigade commanders had vehemently objected. They had maintained that the division was not capable enough to move in the desert up to the border, leave alone getting beyond the border into Indian territory. All the support, including air and logistic support, which had earlier been promised to the division was not forthcoming. There was complete confusion in the orders as far as the air support was concerned. It later transpired that the air force was waiting for a special request to activate Jacobabad airfield which was never received from the army. Their contention had been that they would need seven days to reactivate the airfield. The most unfortunate part was that the air plan had never been demanded by the COS Army, or presented in detail by the Air C-in-C. All was accepted what he vaguely said at different times. Without air support, the operations of 18 Division were foredoomed.

Under the circumstances the 18 Division advance was bound to end in confusion. Immediately after the attack had been launched all communications with the Divisional Headquarters broke off, and the progress of the operation could not be ascertained



SIND / RAJASTHAN BATTLE AREA

till 1030 hours on December 5. One column which was supposed to go elsewhere had succeeded in capturing Longanewala, six miles inside Indian territory but the situation was grim owing mainly to the terrain. Chaos was also caused by the fact that the other column which was supposed to arrive at Longanewala did not reach there on time. It arrived later. A large number of vehicles, guns and tanks had bogged down in the sand. The enemy was master of the skies. It was very active during the day and succeeded in destroying 18 tanks and a number of other vehicles and equipment at his leisure. The force was beset with an acute shortage of ammunition, POL and water. The GOC foresaw a disaster if supplies were not air-dropped.

By December 6, it was clear that the PAF based at Masroor near Karachi could not give effective close support, and had not been able to neutralise the Indian air base in Jaisalmer. In the first strike on December 3, they had apparently attacked the old and abandoned airfields. The formation was ordered to withdraw to the original positions by the new GOC (Major General Abdul Hameed Khan) who took command on December 7. Mercifully the Indians did not pursue.

The war situation in West Pakistan on December 7, was as follows. The attack on Poonch had not succeeded as planned but it was called off in time. It, however, did succeed in fixing the enemy in the area and diverting its attention towards Poonch. 23 Division in the Chhamb salient had succeeded in capturing all its objectives and had closed up to the river Tawi. I Corps in Sialkot had lost the Pukhlian salient, an area of tactical importance and the enemy had been stopped only 1500 yeards short of the Headworks. In spite of the passive defence put up by I Corps the planned operations in this area were going favourably. In a way, the passivity in I Corps defence had been able to suck more Indian troops into this salient; whether this sucking in was really necessary is however, another matter. IV Corps had captured all its limited objectives. 18 Division in Rajasthan had suffered a debacle and was withdrawing to its prepared positions. The Indian divisions had been fixed in their areas by various operations of Pakistani divisions. The attack on Poonch and in the Chhamb salient which had been exaggerated out of proportions by the Indians had fixed all the Indian divisions in Kashmir. Three Indian divisions were fighting in Shakargarh bulge where they were gaining limited

success. Similar was the case in other areas. The Indian 1 Armoured Division was located in Kot Kapura and Muktesar area still uncommitted. Besides that all other troops had been committed except for one armoured brigade at Ajnala. There were, however, local reserves of divisions and corps which could have been utilised by India in case of Pakistani counter-offensive but that would have taken long and might not have influenced the initial breakthrough. In short the preliminary plan had created a favourable situation for the counter-offensive to be launched. It would also be remembered that this was the most crucial time for our troops in East Pakistan where a success in West Pakistan would have galvanized the hard pressed garrisons in East Pakistan. No orders had however been issued to the reserve Corps for launching their counter-offensive.

Lieut-General Tikka Khan, the luckiest general of the army, at the time commanding the reserve Corps continued marking time. After waiting for the green signal impatiently, he flew into GHQ on December 7. Notwithstanding all the discussions and his own keenness to get permission to start his operations the green signal was not given. The only thing that he got was that he was allowed to move a couple of his formations from one place to another.

From December 7 onwards the pressure to launch a counter-offensive started mounting on the COS Army. The Director of Military Operations and his deputy continued warning him that time was slippping by and gradually the initiative was being snatched away by India. On December 8, the COS seemed to have been impressed and promised to take a decision the next day. While he was getting out of the Operations Room, Deputy Director Military Operations got hold of his private secretary and remarked: 'Why don't you help him to make a decision.' The next day instead of ordering an offensive, the COS ordered the splitting of 33 Division—one of the reserve divisions—sending one of its brigades to I Corps, and another to 18 Division. Neither the Director of Military Operations nor the Corps Commander was consulted. The latter had not even asked for any help and was naturally surprised to have a brigade thrust upon it. The splitting of the Reserve Force was an illustration of the violation of the principle of maintenance of the aim. The higher command did not seem to worry about principles of war. Somewhere along the line the C-in-C and the COS had forgotten that the main aim was a counter-offensive.

The battles on the borders continued but except for a few places their tempo had died down. In the Northern Areas of Kashmir the Indians had taken full advantage of the negligible Pakistani defences and the complete lack of roads and tracks which might have enabled Pakistanis to reinforce threatened areas. The Cease-fire Line here was manned by scattered posts of lightly armed local Scouts (Para-Military Force). All told they succeeded in occupying about 225 square miles of area. The important gains included Chalunka and Turtok Broks, two important places lying along the valley of river Shyok which is the major means of communication and 36 posts dominating road Srinagar-Dras-Kargil-Leh. The latter enabled the Indians to achieve a partial security of their main lines of communications to Ladakh. During the same time both Pakistan and India managed to capture some areas along the Cease-fire Line facing Kashmir and Poonch Valley.

In the Chhamb Sector, Commander 23 Division ordered the crossing of river Tawi near Chak Pandit on December 9. It seems he 'persuaded' GHQ to agree to this. By this time the troops which had been in action continuously since the night of December 3, were getting extremely tired. The only fresh looking man in the outfit seemed to be the General himself. He had surely been placed wrongly in that role. His type could hardly confine himself to a holding role. On December 10, the helicopter flying the General to forward troops met an unfortunate accident and he died on his way to hospital.

Purely in deference to the martyred General's wishes, the troops crossed the river on the night of December 10/11. The crossing was carried out by 111 Brigade and its 4 Punjab and 10 Baluch crossed over. Indian reaction was quick and stiff. They were occupying well sited and well prepared defences in depth, whose layers went almost back to Akhnoor. 4 Punjab, which crossed facing Palanwala ran into heavy opposition. Two of its companies walked into the enemy killing area and were almost butchered. By sheer determination and against great odds, the battalion succeeded in establishing a bridgehead. One of the enemy battalions, 9 Jats, fought extremely well and put up stiff resistance even when 10 Garhwals behind them had bolted. The Commanding officer of 4 Punjab, when passing through the Jat positions was stopped by a wounded Jat NCO lying on the ground who saluted him and remarked: 'Mubarak ho Sahib, Hind ki

best paltan mari hai.' (Congratulations, you have destroyed the best battalion of India). The Commanding Officer was impressed with the morale of this Jat. The next night the operation was called off on the arrival of the new commander and the bridgehead which had been established with outstanding bravery and determination, and after great bloodshed was withdrawn. This division had already carried out its mission. The impact of this action was that it succeeded in forestalling any enemy action from this direction. But the overall impact was not so favourable as these operations detracted from the far more serious situation developing in the Shakargarh bulge, considerable effort in artillery and armour which could have been released for the bulge. No serious battles took place in the divisional area till the end of the war.

In the Sialkot Sector the Indians were creeping forward in the Shakargarh bulge. I Corps ordered a counter-attack with a composite force of armour and infantry on Indian concentrations in the Ikhlaspur-Nainakot area. It was called off later and the troops were ordered to pull back and organise defences west of Bein river. This limited sally by armour and infantry seemed to put back the Indian preparations and their advance in this area for some time. In the face of the passive defence of I Corps, the Indians continued creeping forward slowly towards 8 Division defences and at last succeeded in finding a gap in the Pakistani minefields for which they had tried desperately, and launched an attack to capture Shakargarh town and break through the defences. This effort of the enemy was, however, completely frustrated by the gallant action of 19 FF resulting in a complete rout of 3/9 Gurkha Rifles from Chitrana village who left behind 40 dead and 73 prisoners. This frustrated the enemy design to caputre Shakargarh. On December 15/16 another Indian attack was launched across the minefields in area Lagwal-Zafarwal sub-sector. The enemy succeeded in throwing back the holding troops. By the night of December 15, Indians had pushed two tank regiments and two infantry battalions into this gap which was now extended up to Gazipur and Bara Pind. The Indian aim in this area was to cut the Zafarwal-Shakargarh road. On the morning of December 16, 13 Lancers of 8 Armoured Brigade counter-attacked in order to prevent the enemy from breaking out, and after a very costly encounter succeeded in ejecting the enemy from Bara Pind only. At 0500 hours on December 17, 35 FF was launched with the aim of recapturing Jarpal village. The counter-attack was only a partial success. The few counter-

attacks, which 8 Division tried during the war were most noticeable by their lack of planning. The units were hurled into battle without having been given enough time for planning and preparations. The worst example of this attack was on December 17, when against all protestations of its very gallant commanding officer, 35 FF was sent into battle for almost certain massacre.

The Indian advance in this area was deliberate and slow. After contacting the covering troops they had taken 12 days and 12 nights to contact the main Pakistani defences. During this time the Pakistanis had fought with covering troops all along the eight-mile distance between the main defensive position and the border. The Indians suffered heavy losses. One of the Indian divisions, 54 Division, with its 'motto' 'Push on regardless' also took 12 days to cover eight miles.

As far as the Lahore IV Corps was concerned, nothing extraordinary seemed to have happened on their front except that the Indians shelled the whole of the Corps front a few hours before the time of the cease-fire and extended it beyond the time given. Under this cover the Indians tried to recapture some of the lost areas in this sector. The major effort occurred at Pul Kanjri, where an Indian battalion under the cover of intense shelling infiltrated into the middle of the village, and cut off the telephone lines and succeeded in jamming both infantry and artillery wireless communications. As a result the company commander and his artillery observer, who were in the forward platoon position, were completely cut off from other platoons and from their rear. A counter-attack was launched with two companies at 3 a.m. The determined action reached the Indian forward trenches after having suffered heavy casualties and succeeded in occupying them when by mutual local agreement a cease-fire was enforced.

In Rajasthan 18 Division had succeeded in falling back to their prepared positions well within Pakistan by December 10. The Indians having regained the initiative captured three of our outposts including the small Islamgarh salient.

In the Khokharopar Sector, the Indian 85 Brigade with one squadron of armour had commenced its advance on December 4 and had succeeded in pushing back the lightly armed Rangers from the border posts. By the evening on December 8, it had contacted

Pakistan screen after having covered 18 miles without opposition. During the remaining days of the war, this Indian Brigade after repeated attacks at different places, which were repulsed after inflicting heavy casualties, was able to capture two sand dunes which were vacated by Pakistani troops.

In the meantime, 330 Indian Brigade group which had started its advance on difficult desert terrain at the beginning of the war against no opposition was closing in on Umarkot. Its 18 Madras battalion posed a threat to Umarkot on December 16. Next day, at dawn, 20 Baluch audaciously attacked it with one company. It seems that the Indian battalion was taken by complete surprise and bolted after having left behind 53 dead, 19 prisoners of war, some vehicles and a number of weapons and other stores. Still further south the Indians had occupied Nagar Parkar and Virwah after they had been evacuated by the Rangers.

During all this period, the pressure on the COS for a counter-offensive had continued. After 33 Division had been split—a most unwise decision—the counter-offensive plan had been revised and in anticipation of orders to launch the operations, the DMO and his staff sat for whole night on December 12 and produced the operational instructions for the revised counter-offensive plan. At last on December 13, at 9 a.m. the COS gave his approval for the attack to go ahead. Operational Instructions were at once placed before him and after his signature, were flown by special air-courier to all concerned. The attack was to go on the morning of December 16. Later it was postponed for twenty-four hours.

On the evening of December 16, during a normal briefing the COS abruptly said: 'Freeze Tikka', and the loyal staff 'froze' the offensive without any argument. This was the same time when the President was broadcasting to the nation that, by accepting a cease-fire in East Pakistan they had lost only a battle and not the war and was assuring the people that war would continue. The President's speech was out of context as it had been prepared before the Indians announced a cease-fire on the Western front. No one present at the briefing had any inkling of the cease-fire. When they heard the remark to 'freeze Tikka', there was pin drop silence. One of the excuses given by the COS was that the war was not going on well in I Corps area. He also quite unjustifiably indicated his lack of faith in the PAF's ability to support the operations. General

Irshad, Commander I Corps, was at once rung up from the Conference Room and he reiterated that he was happy about the situation in his area. On hearing this the C-in-C Air remarked: 'If it is so why not let Tikka go.' Nevertheless General Tikka was rung up about the 'freeze.' He, of course, did not believe it. He thought it was a fake call. So he rang back to recheck orders.

A flash message about the cease-fire was soon despatched. The reaction was the same, all over. The country went into mourning, officers and jawans cried. A General, who was visiting GHQ at that time, when told about the cease-fire, threw his brief-case and wept. This was the feeling all over the army which had been ordered to surrender and suffer humiliation without having been given a chance to try its metal with the enemy. The reaction of the jawans was also typical, which was summed up by Havildar Mohammad Khan's classical remark. He quoted the Punjabi saying 'Grandma in the first instance made the mistake of getting married but she made the worst mistake by seeking a divorce after that.'

CHAPTER XIV

PAKISTAN NAVY IN THE WAR

THE story of the Navy is a story of continuous struggie to establish its role and attain its rightful place in the defence hierarchy of Pakistan. The importance of maritime power was never appreciated adequately and little could be spared from the expenditures on the Army and the Air Force to provide for the Navy. A low priority to the Navy was perhaps, natural, as the men who had the overriding say in defence matters had inherited a long and distinguished tradition of soldiering and had all been soldiers. For them, the sea was remote. Under colonial rule, the British Royal Navy guarded India's sea frontiers as a part of its imperial responsibility. There was no need to keep an Indian 'fleet in being.' Small anti-gun running squadron at the Indian station was all that was necessary as an auxiliary to the strategically mobile British Royal Navy. On the other hand,a large standing army was created in India for internal security, to safeguard the land frontiers and as a fire-brigade for overseas expeditions in imperial interest. The British Indian Army's influence in the government of India was always pervasive and at times decisive. The Pakistani statesmen and soldiers took to this tradition without understanding all the impli-

cations of governing a sovereign state, unique in its geography and under constant threat from the country, separating the two wings of Pakistan.

Thus the maritime needs of the country separated by 3000 miles of hostile seas were never fully recognised. The location of the Naval Headquarters in Karachi, and the absence of an influential joint planning staff kept the pace of naval development disproportionately slow. With the passage of time the shape and size of the Navy and its very obsolescence ceased to give the Service an image of credibility to fulfil its mission in a war of aggression.

Nevertheless it cannot be over-emphasised that the story of the Navy, in spite of all the discouraging aspects, is a story of long vigil, of great hazards, of gallant deeds in peace and war. Officers and men served their country with the highest devotion, and went about their business without seeking plaudits or applause. Navy, traditionally is called the 'Silent Service.'

As a consequence of complete belief in a continental type of strategy, which was continuously opposed by the Navy, the defence thinking against the threat from India relied on a possible war being of short duration which could be waged on stock-piles of arms and ammunition. The main battles of survival, it was thought would be fought on the plains of the Punjab, and therefore all effort had to be made to strengthen the land/air capability. This precluded any significant role by the Navy to keep the sea lanes open for supplies by sea into East or West Pakistan, or any communications by sea between the two wings of the country during emergencies. The strategy of 'Defence of the East lies in the West', unfortunately even precluded due attention being paid to the local requirements of East Pakistan for riverine warfare which was unavoidable in that area in the event of hostilities.

Between 1947-54, the only Naval additions were three British Destroyers of the Second World War which were already obsolescent. By the latter date US military aid had started trickling into the country and in a way the Americans became responsible for expanding the Navy a little. Only the US Military Aid Advisory Group's professional opinion which backed the Navy, was able to convince the then Prime Minister of the need to strengthen the Navy. One second-hand cruiser and five old destroyers were acquired

from the United Kingdom in 1955, 56 and 57. Even these old vessels could not be modernized due to paucity of foreign exchange. Eighteen months later, Field Marshal Ayub Khan on becoming President, actually ordered a reduction in the size of the Navy. The then C-in-C Navy, Admiral H.M.S. Chaudhary protested, and was later retired for his professional disagreement. The courageous step taken by him went completely unnoticed and unlamented by the public, as it was not allowed to be publicised. No new or additional units were added to the Navy between 1957 and 1966 except for one Fleet Oiler and one World War II submarine which was given on loan by the USA, as part of the Aid Programme.

Under the circumstances the role of the Navy during Indo-Pak War in September 1965 was merely the seaward defence of Karachi, Chittagong and Chalna, and assistance to the Army in the riverine defence of East Pakistan. It was required to carry out only limited escorting of those merchant ships which were bringing in important supplies. In the short duration of the 1965 war, the Navy's performance was much greater than the role demanded and beyond the expectations of the most optimists. It seemed that the Indian Navy was taken completely by surprise and was unprepared to seek an engagement at sea with a much weaker opponent.

After the 1965 War, the Indian Navy had started expanding at a very fast pace and in a short space of time acquired new frigates, submarines, maritime aircraft, anti-submarine helicopters and missile boats. In addition, large investments were made to improve the naval infrastructure, like dockyards, docks, shipways. By 1970, their naval budget was nearly Rupees 200 crore with a substantial foreign exchange component. As a matter of comparison the increase in the Indian Navy during the five years after 1965 War was more than the total strength of the Pakistan Navy quantitatively and many times more qualitatively. The Indians openly embarked on creating two fleets, one for the Bay of Bengal and the other for the Arabian Sea. They had also built a strong naval base in the Andamans for a blockade of East Pakistan. Their Western Fleet could with ease outmatch the Pakistan Navy in the Arabian Sea and their Eastern Fleet could independently blockade the ports of East Pakistan and prevent supplies from getting into Chittagong or Chalna. On the contrary Pakistan Navy's budget remained around Rupees 20 crore with only 4 to 5 crore worth of foreign exchange component. This sum was hardly enough to pay the annual

instalments for the Daphne class submarines, three of which had been purchased from France in the meantime. No money was therefore, available for any modernisation, replacement of old ships or acquisition of new equipment. Except for the three recently acquired Daphne class submarines, Pakistan's main fleet was aging fast. All its other units—one cruiser, seven destroyers and the submarine *Ghazi*—were of World War II vintage and were long past their useful life. Their seagoing and fighting capability was quite unsatisfactory. Out of these PNS *Tughril*, a destroyer, was already on its way to the breaker's yard and the mishap that befell PNS *Badr*, another destroyer, about the middle of August 1971 created the misapprehensions that most of the other units of the fleet would soon meet the same fate as PNS *Tughril*. On August 10, PNS *Badr* on her passage to Karachi from East Pakistan, met cyclonic weather off the Indian port of Goa, about 800 miles from its destination. The rough weather was purely seasonal—monsoonic—which a destroyer is built to ride through. As it happened its steel plates were ruptured and a large portion of her bow was lost due to structural weakness resulting from old age. The ship's company, with commendable effort, were successful in their endeavours to control the damage and save the ship. This was a pointer which put the sea-worthiness of the Navy's surfaceships in doubt, let alone their fighting potential. In the meantime, PNS *Alamgir*, another destroyer had also developed serious mechanical defects. Three destroyers had, therefore, been demilitarized and the others were equally suspect, creating an understandable demoralizing effect on the ships' companies.

Over and above this the Navy suffered from another great and telling handicap. It had no maritime air element. Without such a support in modern times, a navy remains blind and helpless. In consequence, the Navy lost a great deal of its offensive and defensive capability. This deficiency of maritime aircraft became more acute because of two new factors. Firstly, with the introduction of submarines in the Navy, maritime air reconnaissance had become essential for the utilization of their offensive capability to the full. By nature submarines are slow craft and cannot therefore reconnoitre their targets. They have to be put on to targets. Secondly without assistance of maritime reconnaissance aircraft, the Navy remained completely blind against the operation of Indian missile boats, which had newly been acquired from Russia. According to experts, surface ships are no match for these boats which are small in size

with low free-board and therefore difficult to detect. On the other hand they can detect surface ships from about 30 miles without being themselves detected from that distance. A destroyer could only pick them up from about 10 miles. At the same time they carry deadly weapons which can be fired with effect from about 20 miles and apply their own radar—homing system. In the absence of any other satisfactory defence against them they could only be dealt with by air strikes at their base or at sea. Aircraft were therefore the only means to deal with them. As Pakistan could not afford a separate naval air force, the Pakistan Air Force was urged by the Joint Chiefs Committee at different times since 1963 to purchase maritime reconnaissance and strike aircraft to support the Navy. But no such aircraft had been acquired as maritime air support was a low priority with the PAF; incidentally another indicator of the bankruptcy of joint planning and coordination in the machinery for the higher direction of war. On the other hand as a result of their experience in 1965, the Indians were fully prepared in 1971. They had taken pains to build up anti-submarine capability and had acquired five anti-submarine frigates from Russia and four most up to date anti-submarine helicopters (Sea Kings) from Britain. They had also built up their maritime reconnaissance to counter submarines.

In short the Navy was forced to go to war with inadequate and outmoded ships and equipment, and without air cover and great quantitative and qualitative disparities. Whereas in the other two sister services, the Army and the Air Force, some expansion had taken place after the 1965 War, the Navy had to face substantial diminution in its strength. In 1971, it had only 8000 officers and men, half of them working on shore and the other half at sea. Out of the total strength, 3,000 officers and men belonged to East Pakistan and after military action in that province in March 1971 they became ineffective. This meant that almost overnight the Navy was further reduced in trained manpower by about 38 per cent. Also, at the start of military action in East Pakistan, the Navy was drawn into supporting the Army and the civil administration. The meagre strength of the Navy in East Pakistan had gradually to be augmented by reducing dangerously the units and installations in West Pakistan. This meant the loss of a large number of experienced and key personnel for non-naval duties in East Pakistan.

The Navy had neither been consulted nor in any way associated with the decision to take military action in East Pakistan. The

C-in-C Navy had learnt about it only through a chance remark by the President on the midnight of March 25 at Karachi Airport, where the C-in-C had gone to receive the President on his return from Dacca. However, Chief of Staff, Navy, who had arrived in Dacca in the afternoon of March 25, 1971 after a routine visit to the Chittagong Naval Base, had been informed of the intended action about a couple of hours before it actually started. He could not contact Chittagong as the telephone lines had been cut. However, due to the paucity of troops and the confused situation in Chittagong, the Navy had taken the initiative and secured the airfield on March 26, 1971.

The Navy was thus immediately brought in to support the Army and the civil administration and the tasks allotted to it were briefly as follows:—

a. Supporting the Army in clearing certain rebel strong points along the coast and along the river routes.

b. Restoration of the demolished and paralysed port facilities at Chittagong and Chalna for the even flow of defence stores and civil supplies.

c. Movement of defence stores and personnel and essential civil supplies up-country by rivers. The road and rail communications had already been badly damaged or become unreliable.

d. Restoration of the working of the Oil Refinery and the foodgrain silos at Chittagong, both of which had been put out of commission.

On March 25, 1971, the Naval units stationed in East Pakistan comprised a destroyer, the fleet oiler and four patrol crafts. Despite its meagre resources in men and material, the Navy undertook these tasks in a most vigorous manner. It promptly set out to adopt additional measures to perform satisfactorily the tasks allotted to it. The Army Riverine Support Unit had been lying immobilized due to mechanical defects and non-availability of crews. The unit was reactivated and its LCTs (Landing Craft Tanks) and tugs were manned by the Navy which also provided river pilots as the local pilots had disappeared. This unit under a Naval Captain was attached to the Army Logistic Area. The Inland Water Transport Authority and its fleet of rivercraft and coasters had come to a

virtual standstill. Its ferries, barges and other craft had been abandoned in remote khals (channels) by the Bengali crew who had fled. The Navy recovered the abandoned craft, repaired them where required and reactivated them. The Inland Water Transport Authority and the East Pakistan Shipping Corporation were once again put on their feet. Naval personnel were provided to man coasters and craft along with civilian crew, engines and other machinery was repaired where necessary and regular services were resumed. Later when rebel activity increased, the coasters were armed and moved under escort provided by gun boats. The Navy also arranged the purchase of more coasters for the movement of foodgrains and thus helped to avert famine in East Pakistan.

Experienced personnel were also attached to the staff of Headquarters Martial Law to coordinate the work of various sea and inland transport agencies. In addition the Navy helped in coordinating the inter-wing and foreign import and export trade. Besides providing gun boat support for certain Army operations, the Navy also raised a marine battalion for riverine operation and ground defence of port installations, which was operative by the beginning of November 1971.

Just before the military action started, the Oil Refinery in Chittagong had been closed down for routine overhaul and most of its machinery was opened up. Almost all the labour had disappeared on March 26, 1971. In order to meet the increased defence requirements and to keep the daily life of the Province going, it became necessary to reactivate the Oil Refinery. The Navy made the arrangements to get workmen and technicians from Karachi and soon got it functioning.

Another strange task undertaken by the Navy was to put in commission the damaged grain silos and jetties in Chittagong and Chalna. This was an essential step to avert an impending famine in the Province which was looming large owing to the disruption of road and rail communications caused by insurgents and due to delays in the clearance of cargo from the two ports. The Navy's engineers handled this project with exemplary efficiency and speed.

During this time the Navy had also to clear mines from the water approaches to Chalna port and deal with the activities of frogmen there. Mining of Chalna port had come as a complete

surprise at that time. It was only discovered later that an East German merchant ship while coming out of the port had mined the approaches to it.

The Navy's timely actions and ungrudging assistance in all these vast and important fields not only helped the Army operations but also assisted in restoring normal life and particularly averting the famine which had been forecast by a number of experts.

When the Indian invasion of East Pakistan started on November 21, 1971, Pakistan naval force there was grossly outnumbered by the Indian Eastern Fleet. The destroyer had already been withdrawn earlier to West Pakistan for refit and routine repairs. Starting with four gun boats in the month of March 1971, Admiral Sharif, the Flag Officer Commanding East Pakistan and his young Naval Officers had gradually built up the strength of small boats to 24 through improvisation and mobilization of local resources. They were mostly dispersed all over East Pakistan's major rivers in support of Army operations and civil administration. The Eastern Command had continued pressing the Naval Headquarters for an increase in the Naval strength. The Navy had, however stretched itself to the maximum and could not augment its fleet in East Pakistan. Therefore, no major naval ship was available there. Out of the 24 boats, only the four gun boats could be put to sea; the other twenty were river craft, unsuitable for sea operation. Additionally all these boats were armed with short range weapons, more suitable for anti-smuggling operations than for an anti-warship role. Against this force was poised the Indian Aircraft Carrier Task Force of one carrier and eight destroyers/frigates and their Landing Craft Squadron consisting of three LSTs (Landing Ship Tanks). Moreover, while the Pakistan units had been living and working under war conditions for about eight months, the Indians were fresh and knew that the only opposition they could expect would be from Pakistan's four gun boats. These little boats however continued fighting valiantly till the end. Throughout the war these units without any air cover were constantly straffed by shore and carrier-borne aircraft and suffered heavy casualties. The detailed story of this most uneven but gallantly fought action will be available only when the prisoners of war, now present in India, return and are able to tell it. But it is obvious that the odds of the Pakistan Navy against the Indian Navy in this theatre were

worse than those of the 'Revenge' against the Spanish Fleet. Admiral Sharif, the Flag Officer Commanding of East Pakistan, reported the conditions of these units as they existed on December 9, 1971. He said that the attrition rate of gun boats was high due to daily mounting and persistent action of the enemy air. He considered that sixty per cent of the naval strength had been rendered non-operational. However till the end, the Indians, in spite of their air and naval supremacy,could not capture the port of Chittagong from seaward and had to do so by an overland assault from Cox's Bazar.

The Naval Headquarters (NHQ) was completely unaware of the cease-fire negotiations between the Eastern Command and the Indians. The C-in-C Navy learnt about it only when Flag Officer Commanding in East Pakistan informed him and asked for instructions in the early hours of the morning of December 16, 1971. Later the same day, he learnt of the cease-fire through the same source. When he asked for confirmation from the Defence Adviser, the latter showed his inability to deny or confirm the news. The confirmation only came when the Admiral at last managed to contact General Hamid, COS Army, later in the day.

The naval war plans had last been reviewed in March 1971 and were based on limited aim achievable by the available strength and state of the weapons and the equipment that the Navy held. As there had been no changes in the Navy, no need was felt to review or revise them after that date. While planning, the Navy had assumed that it would be given a minimum of one week's notice before the war to redeploy and alert its units at sea. It had also expected that the promised limited air support would be made available within eighty miles of Karachi. As for the Indian intentions, the Navy had visualised that with OSA Missile Boats and submarines available to the Indians, together with the threat from Pakistan submarines, their Navy would not attempt to attack Pakistan ships by their surface ships unless submarines, missiles and air attacks failed to neutralise the Pakistan Navy. Therefore its plans were based on the appreciation that it had no answer to Indian Navy's missile boats. The surface ships were not to be exposed to this danger until the missile boat threat had been neutralized. The ships had to remain at sea within the Air Force fighter cover. The submarines however were to be deployed on offensive patrols off the major Indian ports and other focal areas.

Like other major military decisions, the C-in-C Navy had neither been consulted in nor associated with any of the deliberations that resulted in the decision to counter-attack from West Pakistan. He was merely called up by COS Army, to Rawalpindi on November 29, 1971, and informed of the President's decision to open hostilities in the West in a few days. He was not given the actual date and time which were to be conveyed to him by C-in-C Air through a mutually agreed code word at the appropriate time.

The mutually agreed code word was passed to C-in-C Navy at 1515 hours on December 3, 1971, personally by the C-in-C Air. The commanders concerned were hurriedly collected and given their instructions and signals were despatched to all ships by 1700 hours. The Navy had been deployed in their war stations earlier when Indian belligerent intentions had become clear and on subsequent Indian invasion of East Pakistan on November 21, 1971. Some ships were patrolling 40 miles off Karachi and others 70 miles off the port. This was done for monitoring and checking the incoming ships and suspected craft approaching Karachi. Three Daphne submarines were deployed off the Bombay and Kathiawar coast and the submarine *Ghazi* was despatched to the Vishakhapatnam Naval Base in the Bay of Bengal. The *Ghazi's* task was to carry out offensive mine-laying against Vishakhapatnam and the other three submarines had to attack Indian War ships when ordered.

As brought out earlier in this chapter, the Navy, in the absence of any shore based radar and maritime reconnaissance aircraft was virtually blind. Therefore the services of a civilian radar were requisitioned and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) willingly provided a Fokker Friendship flight to operate reconnaissance flights. The PIA plane had its own limitations for the purpose it was being used. Its radar was a weather radar and it had only 7° decline which could not see downwards. The civil pilots, however, did an extremely good job of work without any previous training in this particular field.

At about the same time on December 3, when Naval HQ was issuing orders and instructions, the Fokker flying along Kathiawar coast—PIA air patrols had been started on November 30—reported the sighting of Indian Western Fleet consisting of a crusier, six destroyers and an oil tanker off the Rann of Kutch coast. It was operating around its forward base at Okha. The Pakistani

submarines deployed in the area were not able to attack it as they got their orders to commence their operations late that evening. Indeed the submarines had themselves seen the Indian Fleet proceeding overhead on December 2 but were unable to attack for the same reasons. As an alternative, an air strike was requested by the Navy but it was not available. Thus by not giving sufficient notice of starting the operations to the Navy, a good opportunity to attack the Indian Western Fleet was missed.

The first Indian naval action took place on December 4, 1971. The Indian Air Force and the Navy seemed to have first class co-ordination. They had already established a Joint Operations Centre in Bombay a few months earlier. Indian Naval attacks were always covered by the Indian Air Force by keeping Karachi under air attacks. At 0800 hours, the Indian Air Force started strafing Karachi. Two aircraft flew very low over the harbour and an oil tank in Keamari was hit by rockets. Indian aircraft strafed at intervals for the whole of the day on December 4. While the air raids were going on, the radar picked up a suspect contact at 2100 hours about 40 miles south of Karachi. It must be mentioned here that the presence of OSA Missile Boats of Russian origin which had been taken over by the Indians, was known and up to the middle of November 1971, Russian naval personnel were seen on these boats in Bombay harbour. The Russian method of deployment which was followed by these boats was that they operated with submarines which acted as watch-dogs and observation posts. The Indian submarines were keeping 60 miles off Karachi and closed up only during the night. The OSA Boats had to have the submarines as directing platforms for their operations.

After having been informed about the suspect contact, efforts were made to identify this contact. While this was being pursued, the attack came. At 2330 hours the Indian Air Force attack was still on, when PNS *Khyber* out on patrol 70 miles off Karachi, signalled that it had been hit by an aircraft bomb. The NHQ was taken aback by this information. They could not believe that an aircraft could do this in the middle of the night. They asked for further information. No reply came from the ship as all communications with it had been lost in the meantime. About the same

time HQ PNS *Wasim*, at Manora, reported having seen a big fire glow on the horizon out at sea. A fast patrol boat was at once despatched to investigate. On arriving at the site, it found mine sweeper PNS *Muhafiz*, 40 miles off Karachi, burning. The first person to be picked up by this boat from the water was the Captain of the minesweeper. It only came to light through him that the ship had been hit by missiles. No report of this incident had been received from this ship. The Indians had hit the two ships simultaneously. Other survivors were also picked up. On receiving information of the missile hit on PNS *Khyber*, the boat despatched to pick up its survivors returned without success with the excuse that the weather at sea was very choppy and the survivors picked up from the minesweeper were in a bad way and needed medical attention immediately. All efforts were made to locate the *Khyber* survivors and 70 of them were rescued the next afternoon after about 18 hours of its sinking, although the search had continued by sea and air for the whole of the day.

At midnight on December 4, the local Air Force Commanding Officer was approached to order an attack on the retreating missile boats. It was calculated that they would take six hours to reach their nearest sanctuary and thus allow enough time for the air to attack them early next morning, but no air strike could be made available. It was known later that after the missile attack the Indian boats instead of retreating south, had sailed westward off Gawadar where they stayed for three days. This fact came to notice by a chance conversation with someone travelling in a Cessna which had flown over Gawadar on December 5. After having seen the pictures of the boats he came out with the information that he had seen two of them near Gawadar.

Anyway the Air Force in Karachi did not react to the Navy's request; therefore, the C-in-C Navy rang up the C-in-C PAF in Rawalpindi at 0400 hours and woke him up. After all sorts of pleading, the answer he obtained was 'Well old boy, this happens in war. I am sorry your ships have been sunk. We shall try to do something in the future.'

After the missile attack the position of the surface ships at sea became almost untenable, as they had no defence against missiles.

On December 7, the Flag Officer Commanding, the Flotilla, after consulting his sea going Commanders, met the C-in-C. He acquainted him with the prevailing situation and suggested a withdrawal of the ships inside the harbour in order to escape a missile attack which was most likely to occur. The ships would of course be more susceptible to air attack there, but could also provide a powerful anti-aircraft threat, particularly against a low flying attack. It was, therefore, decided to withdraw all ships to the harbour on December 8 except for the fleet oil tanker which was fully loaded. It had to stay out because of fire hazard within the harbour by its presence and also that its deep draught restricted her entry into port. The oil tanker *Dacca* was, therefore, ordered to anchor with the other merchant ships away from the port. The Indian missile boats on their passage from Gawadar to Bombay, attacked the merchant ships outside the anchorage at night on December 8. *Gulf Star*, flying the Panama flag and the US owned ship *Venus Challenger* were sunk and *Hamratton*, a British vessel was severely damaged. *Dacca* along with three merchant ships, was also hit. Her company valiantly fought the fire and saved the ship after heavy damage had been done. One of the missiles fired by OSA Boats flew over Manora and hit the first big steel structure it came cross. That was one of the oil tanks at Keamari which started huge fires in the oil farm. The course followed by this missile was strange, perhaps its homing device had failed. The withdrawal of the naval surface ships into harbour was thus claimed by NHQ as a sound tactical move as otherwise, all the naval units would have been attacked by the missile boats and in all probability most of them sunk. Some officers of the Navy thought that it was a shameful act for the Navy to retreat to the harbour. This withdrawal is however a point on which any verdict is best left to Naval experts who would probably be discussing this as a case study for ears.

On December 8, air attacks on Karachi had started at 2000 hours. Again the air attacks were well coordinated with the missile attack at 2300 hours. Karachi was kept under air attack till 0200 hours on December 9 to give enough time to these missile boats to get away. The Navy was blamed all along by the public for doing nothing against the constant air attacks on Karachi. But the public did not know that the Navy had neither the means nor the responsibility for the air defence of Karachi. The Navy's presence in the harbour however acted as a deterrent to Indian aircraft. The

dockyard was bombed but providentially remained safe. Four Indian aircraft were brought down by the Navy's anti-aircraft guns that night.

In the meantime PNS *Babur* while operating with other units of the Flotilla off the Makran coast in the evening on December 5, engaged a submarine. Destroyers were immediately despatched to carry out anti-submarine operations. Sonar contact of the submarine was achieved with the submarine which had by now submerged, and a number of attacks were carried out with anti-submarine mortars. Later, on basis of the evidence collected, the Navy claimed to have damaged the Indian submarine.

Pakistani submarines were operating in their allotted regions. PNS *Ghazi* which had sailed towards Vishakhapatnam with special instructions, had to reach its destination on November 26, 1971. She was to report on arrival but no word was heard from her. Efforts were made to contact her but to no avail. The fate of the *Ghazi* was in jeopardy before December 3. The Indians made certain preposterous claims about the sinking of the *Ghazi*. However, being loaded with mines, it seems to have met an accident on her passage and exploded. A few foreign papers at that time also reported that some flotsam had been picked up by Indian fishermen and handed over to the Indian Navy, which made up stories about its sinking. PN submarine *Hangor*, operating off the Kathiawar coast stalked and attacked two Indian Navy frigates at night on December 9. It succeeded in sinking one frigate and damaging another. The Indian admission of the loss of 19 officers and 193 sailors and the rescue of six officers and 93 sailors gave the impression that the second frigate might also have been sunk.

A brief mention must be made of the four sea going Naval patrol boats which were operating in East Pakistan waters. After having operated continuously for about nine months one of them was sunk through enemy air action during the last days of the war. Two of them were scuttled in Chittagong harbour at the time of surrender in East Pakistan. The fourth, PNS *Rajshahi*, made a heroic and spectacular escape against great odds and through the heavily mined and extensively patrolled water approaches by the Indian Navy off Chittagong harbour. The Captain of the *Rajshahi*, Lieutenant Sikandar Hayat, took the daring step and his gallant crew responded.

The overall losses on both sides which were almost equal were as under:—

Units	*Pakistan Navy*	*Indian Navy*
Destroyers/Frigates	1 sunk	1 sunk 1 damaged
Submarines	1 sunk (due to an accident on board)	1 damaged
Mine Sweepers	1 sunk	1 sunk
Patrol Craft	1 sunk 2 scuttled	3 sunk
Aircraft		11 destroyed by Naval guns.

The Navy's claims about the sinking of Indian ships—some acknowledged by the Indians—need to be highlighted. So far as is known the Indians admitted the sinking of their anti-submarine frigate *Khukri*. Any professional naval commentator would describe this feat as outstanding, firstly because Pakistan submarines were operating without support aircraft and secondly because the enemy vessel was equipped with all sorts of modern equipment to destroy submarines. Thirdly, the war at sea, particularly the submarine war takes a long time to develop, and this achievement took place within a few days of the start of a very short war. Fourthly, the submarine normally attacks the defenceless merchant ships which cannot retaliate, whereas this was an attack against a man-of-war. After the war, even the critical BBC commentators praised Pakistan's naval effort. Considering the shape and size and age of the ships at its command, they said, the Pakistan Navy had acquitted itself well against the Indian Navy.

CHAPTER XV

PAKISTAN AIR FORCE IN WAR

ASKED about the excellent performance of PAF in 1965 war, the then Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force had remarked: 'Fortified as they were by a firm conviction of the righteousness of our national cause and faith in divine help, death held no terror for the PAF men. When faced with overwhelming odds, an enemy much larger in numbers, and better equipped, our many *Rafiquis*, *Munirs*, *Iqbals* showed no hesitation, no fear, no doubts, simply an urge to attack. This was the spirit that enabled us to do more than what military honour required and made us attempt the impossible.' Indeed the small air force had done extremely well, by better planning and bolder strategy, against the larger and better equipped Indian Air Force. The PAF had thus acquired world fame almost overnight.

It would seem that, in 1971, planning of the PAF high command did not come up to the standard required for the repetition of the remarkable performance of six years ago. Consequently, it did not play as effective a role as was expected of it. There were various reasons for this.

The situation and the environment in which the 1971 war was fought were substantially different from that of 1965. It would be pertinent here to look into these in the special context of the air war. India had learnt her lessons of 1965 war well and had embarked on a planned reorganization and re-equipment of her air force. For instance, in 1965, India had only about half a squadron of supersonic aeroplanes; in 1971 there were about twelve. In 1965, India's early warning and ground control organization was rather makeshift; by 1971 she had not only perfected a sophisticated radar environment for air defence along the borders of West Pakistan by providing overlapping high and low radar coverage, but had also acquired the capability to look deep into Pakistan and even use an airborne control and communication system for their strikes. By 1971, a string of modern airfields had also been constructed along the borders of Pakistan and concrete cover pens had been built on these airfields as a defensive measure for aircraft. Similarly in 1965, the Indian anti-aircraft defences depended mostly on World War II vintage guns whereas in 1971, India had perfected a balanced and integrated anti-aircraft force of surface-to-air guided weapons and radar-controlled guns which were well-knitted to produce an effective and formidable defence zone along the border and fairly deep in their own territory. India had also made sure of logistic support to these weapon systems through indigenous production and foreign supplies, mainly Russian. The details of the Russian support during October, November and December 1971 and the extent of their active participation on the side of India during the war have not been made public. It is, however, known that in addition to a large number of MIG-21s and SU-7s, a modernized Soviet manned Tupolev TU-117, 'Moss' airborne warning system with improved low level missile capability and two new types of bombs to hole airfield runways were also provided. To say it briefly, Indian planning had taken note of their weaknesses in supersonics, air defence evironments, surface-to-air guided weapons and modern anti-aircraft guns. They had also crystallized their strategic options and were ready for the various contingencies with up-dated plans for command, control and other aspects of the operations.

The IAF with expansion and modernization had grown both in size and offensive potential by 1971. It had in fact become the fifth largest air force of the world after those of the United States, Russia, China and France. By an estimate the total IAF inventory

of aircraft was approximately 2000, taking into account the nearly 600 aircraft in reserve, and transport and support type aircraft and trainers on which the IAF could call upon in time of need. It was organised into 38 squadrons, 28 of which were deployed against West Pakistan and 10 around East Pakistan. The PAF, on the other hand could muster only about 250 first line aircraft consisting of Sabres, a few F-104s, Chinese built MIG-19s, the French Mirages, US B-57 bombers and T-33 Jet Trainers. They were organised into 11½ squadrons, out of which 10½ were in West Pakistan and one in East Pakistan. India, therefore, had overwhelming superiority in the air and could easily take offensive action to neutralize the effectiveness of the PAF and support its ground forces in making quick territorial gains in Pakistan.

During the same time the development of the Pakistan Air Force had not been able to keep pace with that of the IAF. The normal source of supply of the weapon systems and their spares support for the PAF had been the United States and, since 1965, this source had completely dried up not only in respect of acquisition of new aircraft or weapon systems but also in the matter of replacement of existing aircraft, or in most cases even logistic or spares support. Other sources of supply suffered from political constraints and from problems associated with changing over from one system to another. As a result, the weapon systems in the PAF were a collection of what could be acquired from the various sources open to Pakistan. There was, therefore, an element of improvisation in what the PAF had, and it reflected a lack of planned development to a certain force goal. In fact, it would do well here to narrate in some detail, the flux in which the PAF happened to be, during the period between the two wars.

The USA had not only stopped the supply of equipment but had also placed an embargo on the purchase of spares for those weapons which she had already supplied under the Military Aid Programme. Pakistan was similarly isolated from other Western sources of supply after the war in 1965. She, therefore, suddenly faced a serious situation as far as her defence was concerned and her US equipped air force had, therefore, to look elsewhere to save itself from being grounded. At this stage the Chinese Government made an offer to furnish the PAF with combat aircraft, which was gratefully accepted. MIG-19 was originally a Russian aircraft which they had introduced into service in 1955, but in the meanwhile

the Chinese had made certain improvements in it during their own production of this aircraft. The PAF soon got over the initial difficulties of introducing this newly built equipment, with technology different from that of the Western aircraft it was used to. Within a year the PAF had made two squadrons of MIG-19s fully operational. Later, in order to acquire a multi-mission weapon system with an all weather capability 24 Mirage-III Strike Interceptors were purchased from France and started arriving in 1968. In 1971, the PAF had the most cosmopolitan first line combat aircraft representing the technologies of both the East and the West. Pakistan had also developed local sources of manufacture in order to become self-sufficient in as many spares as possible. Considerable success was achieved in this field, but these polyglot weapons and equipment had created logistic problems,including the maintenance of their large variety of equipment.

The defection of some East Pakistani elements of the Air Force and their grounding after April, 1971, had also affected the PAF's operational efficiency like that of its two sister services. The total consisted of 35 pilots—a considerable number for a small air force—and about 25 per cent of the maintenance personnel. The absence of the pilots was not felt as much as that of the maintenance personnel. The latter deficiency had an adverse effect on the serviceability of the aircraft. However, the most dangerous effect of the defection of East Pakistani personnel was on the operations of the PAF. All information about the air defence system of Pakistan, deployment of radar and the operational plans, was passed on to the Indians.

In spite of all the PAF difficulties and the Indian numerical and technical superiority the younger officers in the PAF believed that they had the means to take on the IAF and inflict a crushing blow on it. There were no feelings of being handicapped amongst them. This confidence was based mainly on two factors. Firstly, they argued that they knew the equipment and the planes the IAF was using and their characteristics and their performance would not come as a surprise to them. Secondly, though the PAF aircraft were of different makes and different characteristics, luckily they could be combined to produce a better opposition to more modern and technically supperior IAF aircraft. They maintained that the best results out of the PAF, as it was organised in equipment and weapons, could be achieved only by following a forward strategy.

This would require knocking out the Indian airfields at Amritsar and Pathankot and generally controlling the air 30 to 40 miles along the borders in northern India. However, in order to meet the Indian challenge in the air, the PAF high command followed a different strategy.

There was no joint planning. The PAF plan was based on the war lasting six months, as the air C-in-C is reported to have told a number of his officers. His main idea was to conserve the air force. The Supreme Commander or the COS, Army never demanded to see the plan and seemed to have accepted whatever the C-in-C, PAF told them vaguely. In 1965, the PAF had been on the defensive strategically but tactically it was most actively offensive. In 1971, however, it seems that the PAF chose to be on the defensive both strategically and tactically. It was committed to defending its bases only and waiting for the enemy to come and attack them. This kept the aircraft perpetually busy in air patrols over the defended bases. The PAF defensive strategy relied too heavily on the expectation that the IAF would carry out mass raids on the PAF bases and would thus suffer heavily. The PAF planners do not seem to have vizualised or planned for any other contingency. They, therefore, failed to provide suitable ground infra-structure at any other fields particularly the forward airfields in West Pakistan. Consequently, the PAF was not kept highly mobile and flexible but was confined to selected airfields in the north away from the border and, therefore, the strategic lines of communication which ran close to the border could not be adequately defended. As a result, the deployment of the PAF in the rear airfields decreased the effective strike range of its aircraft and also imposed severe limitations on the reaction time against any enemy attack on forward troops and vital lines of communications. As for the support to the Army, it promised to provide only close and reconnaissance support on a limited scale in earlier stage of the war, but if the situation permitted it would concentrate to support in crucial battles if required.

In East Pakistan, as brought out earlier, there was only one F-86E squadron with twin airfield in Dacca as operational centre. No other airfields in East Pakistan were operational. It is interesting that India apparently unable to believe that Pakistan would be so foolhardy as to be content only with the twin airfield of Dacca, took the trouble of bombing the Chittagong airfield and a few others. India, on the other hand, had 10 squadrons operating from

as many airfields. In addition, they had their aircraft carrier INS Vikrant. The lone PAF squadron, therefore, had to face a threat from all sides. In addition, it suffered from the lack of any early warning system in order to react to a low level threat. A low level Radar at Dacca was earlier moved to West Pakistan for reasons which are hard to comprehend. Mobile observers had already been withdrawn in March, 1971 due to the political situation.

The PAF squadron had provided support to the Army in April, 1971. After the Indian invasion they had only one air engagement when on November 22, three PAF Sabres supporting the ground forces in the Jessore area were surprised by 8 Indian aircraft. Two Sabres were lost in this action while an Indian aircraft was destroyed. The main air attack was launched by the IAF on December 4, when 21 raids with varying number of aircraft were launched against Dacca airfields. The PAF squadron engaged them in six of these raids and succeeded in shooting down 9 Indian aircraft for the loss of three of their own and seven were brought down by ground fire. 'Saturday's spectacular daylight air battles over Dacca airport and the military cantonment, in which the Indians lost 16 aircraft against two Pakistani planes brought down are not easy to explain.'* On December 5, the Indians repeated their performance in the same pattern but no serious engagement took place. On the morning of December 6, and just after the return of the PAF aircraft from an army support mission in the Comilla area, the Indians came with their heaviest attack, and bombed and cratered the air strips, which could not be repaired with all the efforts made. No aircraft could be launched after that. When the fall of Dacca became imminent the remaining eleven aircraft out of the original 16, were destroyed by the PAF itself to prevent their falling into the enemy hands. The IAF flew over 2500 sorties during operations against East Pakistan. The PAF losses were 5 aircraft against 28 Indian aircraft destroyed in air combats and by ground fire. Thus came to an end the story of this brave squadron which, with all the drawbacks and with no offensive capability had operated extremely well in the air defence environment of those days.

The war in West Pakistan started when the army went into action just before dusk on December 3. A little time before that,

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* The *Daily Telegraph*, December 6, 1971.

the PAF had started its operations from the West and struck at Pathankot, Amritsar, Avantipura and Srinager, followed by night attacks on other airfields of the enemy in varying numbers of aircraft at each airfield. Throughout these attacks only a total of 18 to 26 aircraft were used. The aim of these attacks was to diminish the capability of the IAF to operate against West Pakistan from its selected forward bases, some of which were only ten to fifteen miles from the international boundary. The small effort, used in these strikes, and the timing of the attacks, are hard to understand and could not have been expected to achieve even this limited aim.

The pressure on most other Indian forward airfields was continued throughout the war and the PAF claimed to have achieved success by progressively diminishing the capability of the IAF to operate from at least some of these airfields. However, the success gained by the PAF in these operations must have been only meagre and momentary due to the weapon system used. The main weapon used in these strikes was 750 lbs bomb against runways. The radar stations were straffed and rocketed. It is not known for certain if any IAF aircraft were destroyed on the ground during these strikes. The PAF never claimed any and India maintains that none was destroyed. It was simply a defensive move and aimed at preventing the IAF using forward bases.

The original strike on seven Indian airfields at about dusk on December 3, was not an Israeli type of preemptive strike against the IAF as the Indian propaganda had some uniformed quarters believe. The PAF is too well trained and pragmatic a force to indulge in wild speculations against such highly organised and technically and numerically superior air force as the IAF. It was well dispersed in numerous airfields under the protection of well sited concrete revetments or pens with extremely well organised air defence system including early warning radar, radar controlled anti-aircraft guns and surface-to-air missiles. In addition, the IAF was already on the alert as the war in East Pakistan had started on November 21 and had surely anticipated an attack from the West at any time since then.

The IAF seems to have been suitably provoked by the PAF initial attacks to take action against PAF bases and was quick to react. Within about two and a half hours of the PAF attack, IAF

Canberras struck at the airfields at Sargodha, Mianwali, Rafiqui, Chander, Murid and Risalawala. However, the damage caused was insignificant and did not hamper the PAF operations from these airfields. Three Canberras out of the twelve which came over the Pakistani airfields were destroyed, two by ground fire and one by a Mirage. This was followed by 69 Indian sorties of SU-7 and Hunters on December 4 again on airfields. During the day the Indians lost ten aricraft in air combats and seven were brought down by anti-aircraft guns. During the following three days the Indians kept up their pressure on Pakistani airfields, but with a progressively diminishing number of sorties. During the first few days the small band of dedicated airmen rose to the heights of professionalism and valour and established their ascendency in air combat over the IAF and retained it during the remaining period of the war.

The Indians, however, soon realised their mistake which could be termed as fighting in the air chosen by their enemy and wisely called off their operations against the Pakistani airfields. The IAF had failed to overwhelm the PAF defences and having suffered substantial losses switched its pattern of attack on undefended targets. They turned their attention towards communication centres, selected industrial targets and towns which lay mostly in close proximity of the international borders and affording little reaction time to the PAF. The defensive strategy of the PAF in fact, gave the IAF a free hand to interdict Pakistan communications and other strategic targets and to keep pressure on the Pakistan troops in the forward areas. The situation as it emerged, seemed that, while the PAF had complete superiority in the air on their bases, the IAF could operate without hindrance in the forward areas and over Pakistani vital communications along her borders.

In this sphere, the circumstances for the IAF were favourable and they achieved considerable success. Pakistan's air defence lacked radar coverage all along her borders. The Indians had been informed of the blind spots in the radar cover by the defecting East Pakistanis and exploited them to the maximum. The Pakistani lines of communication were ill-prepared to meet the Indian interdiction threat. It is hard to believe that the planners had never foreseen that the Indians would resort to such strategy; the truth probably is that with her limited resources Pakistan found it impossible to do much about the lines of communication except indirectly through a different strategy. It is reported that the Russians advised

India to change her strategy from that of destroying the PAF to destroying the lines of communication and industrial targets in order to restore the IAF morale. Lastly, the Pakistan Air Force was defensively deployed in depth and was not attempting intruding missions. The C-in-C, PAF seems to have over-centralised the command and allowed little flexibility to his subordinates. Restrictions were placed on the use of some weapons, and the pilots were left with no discretion in the matter. Hardly any action could be taken without clearance from the C-in-C. In a service where opportunities are fleeting, these restrictions turned out to be a hindrance rather than a help. If ever there was enough time to get the C-in-C's approval and still act, he was invariably found busy elsewhere and the opportunity was lost. These were also some of the reasons why the public, particularly the citizens of Lahore and Karachi, having got used during 1965 war to watching and applauding air combats from their roof tops, now had to look on helplessly as the Indian Air Force operated over their cities with impunity. No doubt, the PAF reputation in the eyes of the suffering public declined.

At this stage, the PAF finding itself unemployed did not seem to know what to do with itself. Later, it turned to supporting ground operations on a scale larger than it had planned for. But this support also suffered because of the PAF deployment in airfields a long distance away from the battle-fields. The losses suffered by 18 Division in the desert and the Navy in Karachi area were in no small measure attributable to the inability of the PAF to intervene effectively in land and naval battles in the south, because of this deployment.

During the two weeks of the war in the western theatre a total of 306 missions consisting of about 922 sorties were carried out in direct support of the army and interdiction missions against enemy build up. These support missions were flown both by day and night, and all types of aircraft including T-33 trainers were utilized for the purpose. The main targets for this type of support were enemy armour, gun positions, vehicles, troop concentrations, railway trains and road convoys carrying troops or ammunition, ammunition dumps, bulk fuel storage, and rail tracks in the vicinity of operational areas. The damage inflicted in these missions could not be accurately assessed in all cases. The use of the air force against ammunition dumps in Akhnur on December 5 and Ferozepur on

December 8 was found to be most effective and it is believed that both of these dumps were heavily damaged if not totally destroyed. Similarly, during the interdiction missions, the strikes at the Bhatinda and Gurdaspur railway stations were significant and very successful. So were the attacks on Mukerian and Barmer. During the attack on an ammunition train at Mukerian, near Gurdaspur, on December 15, the two Mirage pilots went too close to the train in order to ensure successful strike. The train exploded with such violence that the debris was thrown up to 400 feet and the flames to almost 1500 feet. One of the Mirages was damaged by the flying splinters. At Barmer railway station the enemy troops concentration was successfully dealt with and serious losses inflicted. Only 13 photo reconnaissance missions were carried out for the Army and a large number of visual reports were also sent to the Army Operations Directorate.

However, there was little coordination at the Inter-service level and interdiction targets were selected at random by the PAF on its own—an unforgivable position. There were no pre-planned interdiction targets nor any of the successes exploited. Use of the air force to the best advantage of the ground operations, besides the lack of inter-service coordination, suffered from lack of joint training and joint planning by a combined staff of the Army and the PAF. The PAF had the capability after the first few days of the war to provide extensive support to the Army, but the latter did not have enough trained personnel to utilize this support. The main difficulty was the absence of air control teams and whatever forward controlling existed proved inefficient. A considerable number of army officers had been trained as Forward Air Controllers, but then they had been haphazardly posted back to units and formations, with the result that these officers were not available, often holding other key appointments at the time.

The PAF was not equipped to support the naval operations. The maritime reconnaissance was only provided by the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and civil aviation aircraft which had been pressed into service after the emergency. In all 59 sorties by PIA aircraft and 68 sorties by civil aviation aircraft were provided during the war. In spite of all their limitations and their pilots' lack of training for this particular task these aircraft still performed very well. One Fokker aircraft was lost during these operations. The PAF launched a B-57 mission against the Indian Missile Boat

harbour at Okha and some harbour installations were set on fire, but this was late in the war and much after the time when the Navy had asked for it, and none of the Missile Boats, already out to sea, was affected. Repeat strikes were also launched on December 9 and 10 and some other installations and two large oil tanks were set ablaze. The last strike was carried out by a section of F-104s, which sighted an anti-submarine Alize aircraft of the Indian Navy and shot it down. After the Indian air attacks on Karachi, the people wondered why PAF did not strike at Bombay harbour. It failed to attack Bombay in retaliation to the Indian attacks on Karachi's civilian targets. This should have been done even for psychological reasons, but the PAF missed the opportunity. The excuse for not doing so was that it had night capability only for a strike at Bombay and was not convinced of gaining any military advantage there. The Indian announcement of a PAF strike at Bombay and stories of the damages done there, were, therefore, surprising.

The Pakistan Air Force flew 157 day and 134 night sorties against targets in India during the two weeks of war from its bases in West Pakistan. In addition, it made 922 sorties in support of the Pakistan Army operations, including both day and night photographic reconnaissance, and 27 sorties in support of the Pakistan Navy operations. A total of 1549 sorties were flown during this period for the air defence of Pakistani air bases and other areas vital to the country's war effort. There were another 125 sorties for air transportation, communication and command, to give a grand total of 2,914 sorties flown from just before sunset on December 3, till 1700 hours on December 17, or an average flying effort of just over 208 sorties per day'.* This is a creditable performance when it is realised that approximately four squadrons were not utilized at all during the war. They were supposed to have been conserved for the big land battles ahead. The concept of conservation of the air force for this purpose does not stand to reason. A favourable air situation must precede an army offensive and not follow it.

The breakdown of the numbers of Indian aircraft destroyed or damaged during the war, as claimed by the PAF is 141. This number includes those brought down by ground fire. Out of this number,

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* The *Air War*, December 1971, *Air Force Day Souvenir 1972*, Public Relations Directorate, PAF.

104 are confirmed destroyed, 15 are so far unconfirmed and 22 were damaged. The list of the type of aircraft destroyed or damaged is topped by 44 SU-7 and 43 Hunters followed by 19 Canberras, 8 MIG-21, 5 HF-24, 3 each of Gnat and Mysteres, one each of AOP aircraft, Alize and MI-4, and 13 Jet fighters of undetermined type. This claim does not include any IAF losses during night attacks by PAF on IAF bases. Approximately half of the number claimed were destroyed or damaged by ground fire.*

During the same period the total PAF losses were 15, ten of which were lost in air combat and five aircraft by enemy ground defences at Indian Air Force bases and over the battle areas. Most of the losses were suffered in Sabres and no Mirages were lost. This total does not include the four aircraft lost through accidents and the eleven destroyed by the PAF itself at Dacca to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. One result of the defensive strategy and the excessive anxiety to keep the force in being was that when cease-fire was announced on December 17, its threat to India remained as big as it was at the start of the war. The pilot strength had also increased due to recall and a few new trainees joining operational squadrons. If it started off the war with 250 aircraft in service, on December 17, it had 251. The small losses were made up from the provident small reserve of aircraft. All airfields were operational with full facilities, sufficient fuel and weapons. It had the capability to provide considerable support to any offensive of the Army besides looking after its own air defence. Above all, the morale of both pilots and ground personnel was extremely high and the sense of frustration at the cease-fire was therefore all the more keen. They were bitter about the way their high command had handled the war and felt they had been let down.

With its numerical inferiority, serious limitations in radar cover and the enemy's knowledge of its blind spots, the performance of the Pakistan Air Force in terms of individual pilots and technicians was of a high standard—a standard of which any air force in the world could be proud. But the Pakistani public, not being capable of understanding the characteristics of aerial warfare, was not happy with its performance. With the PAF record in 1965 war in the background, the people had expected better performance.

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* Details taken from *The PAF War Diary of Events*. An article in *Shaheen*, Vol XXII, No 1, May-August 1972.

If the PAF victory was not spectacular and did not come up to public expectations, there were reasons for it. The main reason was the higher direction of the PAF effort. The C-in-C, PAF failed to provide imaginative leadership to plan and direct the air effort. Both strategically and tactically the air force was kept on the defensive. It was deployed in depth but too thinly. Whereas it could undertake its own defence it could not generate offensive effort. When the Indians changed their strategy on or about December 7, after the first three days, the PAF was not prepared to change over during the short war to meet the new enemy threat, and remained helpless. In addition, by too much centralized control, it was kept on the leash all the time. It operated only about 50 per cent of its war time capability. As for Inter-service cooperation, it had not acquired any maritime support capability and did not provide any meaningful support to the Navy. The support to the Army was plentiful but it suffered in its effort due to lack of coordination and joint training and planning. In fact the Army was not trained enough in this sphere to get the maximum out of the air force effort.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTERMATH

ON December 18, it was all over. The cease-fire on the Western borders came as a surprise to most of the populace. Although the people had heard earlier that India had announced a unilateral cease-fire, they still believed Yahya Khan, who had said on December 16 that the war on West Pakistan's borders would continue till victory was achieved. They believed him, not because they trusted him, but just because it was what they wanted to believe. The people had not understood the implications of Yahya Khan's broadcast about the cessation of hostilities in East Pakistan. They were not aware of the perfidy of their rulers. They had no idea how negligent and callous their rulers had been in handling the vital matters of peace and war. How wreckless and desperately inept Yahya Khan had been with the responsibilities of his office was not known to most people. They were dazed and bewildered.

There was spontaneous reaction of the people against Yahya Khan and his advisers. On the night of December 18, after the cease-fire, the people in Rawalpindi started collecting to march on the President's House and were diverted with great difficulty.

There were large scale gatherings in the blacked-out bazars and streets. Not knowing how the future world shape itself, the feelings of the people were not clear. But soon a general consensus emerged about the ruling junta—Yahya Khan must leave immediately. His house in Peshawar was burnt down, and liquor shops in most of the towns were ransacked. This was quite symbolic. The mounting anger of the betrayed people forced the regime to announce that Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had earlier been sent to the UN as leader of Pakistan delegation, was to be called back. Yahya Khan and his coterie of advisers still hoped that the people would somehow or other be appeased, if some sort of government composed of political leaders was installed. Their effort still was to continue ruling the country with the help of some docile political leaders. The common man, however, understood that the fate of the country could not be left any more in the hands of such senseless and incompetent rulers. The country had waited in agony since December 1970—full two years as it was—for Yahya Khan's promises to come true. As full realisation dawned upon the people. that Yahya Khan had done great harm to the country in his effort to continue his illegitimate rule, all eyes turned towards Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was the acknowledged leader of West Pakistan. A mammoth crowd welcomed him on December 20, as he arrived in Rawalpindi. The crowd almost accompanied him to the President's House. The demands of the people were clear that full control of the government by the people's representatives was the only acceptable solution.

And, that is what happened in the President's House. Late at night on December 20, Mr. Bhutto disclosed in his broadcast that Yahya Khan wanted to stay on as President, or at least General Abdul Hamid Khan to continue as the Commander-in-Chief. Fortunately, none of this was acceptable to Mr. Bhutto who wanted to make a clean break with the past and the misdeeds of the previous regime. The country had already suffered too much on account of the ambitions of a few individuals. In answer to the fervent prayers of the masses he announced that the democratic government would be restored and promised to set up a new course of national reconstruction. A new system of government based on social justice would be built on the debris of the old order. People had waited too long and had paid too high a price for what was their inherent right.

The great humiliation which the people of Pakistan had suffered due to an unequal and unfought war, the surrender of over 90,000 soldiers and civilians in Dacca, an almost dictated cease-fire on the West Pakistan borders, and the separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, created many problems for the future. When I use the phrase, 'people of Pakistan', I include the people of East Pakistan. From whatever viewpoint one might look at the matter, it was East Pakistan that suffered the most, and would continue to suffer in the future. Those people in East Pakistan, who had hoped like many other misguided people who had been hoodwinked by self-styled liberators from foreign lands that the expulsion of 'the oppressors' would usher in a millennium, would soon find that it never does.

Fed for years on misleading press and radio reports due to autocratic control of the mass media, victimised by an innate lack of political maturity to see and face facts and besotted by an inveterate habit of wishful thinking, the people of Pakistan were not prepared for this 'tide in the affairs of men.' Neither in a mood nor in the habit of accepting their faults as the main reason of their tragedy, the stunned Pakistanis, both in the East and the West, blamed everything, almost unanimously, on treacherous plots within the country and the conspiracies of the outside world to destroy their homeland. Amidst a general talk of conspiracy and plots behind the debacle, only a couple of voices were raised to bring home the truth that the country, notwithstanding the apparent anti-Pakistan plots, stood divided only because the political leaders and people of Pakistan, including those in the East, had, as a whole, simply failed to create conditions to remain one; or, more specifically speaking, had failed to create institutions which would have acted as cushions to absorb any fissiparous tendencies. The ideological dynamism of the early years of independence having waned, the political leadership in both the wings failed to forge an enduring bond or a lasting link. A decade of vested interests, corrupt political conditions and autocracy bred mutual suspicions and mistrust, leading to polarisation of regional interests and sympathies. So much so, that when the East and West Pakistanis had, perforce, to part, they could not do so as friends.

During the period which followed the debacle, the attitude of the people of West Pakistan towards East Pakistan and its new Government was spotlighted because of its obvious urgency and

importance. Beset and bewildered by a harrowing detail of the grievous circumstance, the people in West Pakistan battled with their thoughts. Should they, or should they not accept the severance of East Pakistan as a 'fait accompli' and recognise 'Bangladesh' as a sovereign country? Must they, or must they not, believe that Pakistan had been divided because the majority of the people in East Pakistan wanted to secede and live in independence; or is it to be that a small group of subversive miscreants, spearheading an anti-Pakistan conspiracy, had succeeded in chucking off the legitimate authority and established themselves as the rulers of 'Bangladesh'? In any case, the role of India and her armed aggression against Pakistan's territory was not beyond the comprehension of the people of West Pakistan. But specific questions upper-most in the minds of the people were: Will the Pakistanis ever again reunite and become one country and one people? What will be the attitude of Sheikh Mujib in this new situation?

Mr. Bhutto was well aware that a new course of relationship between East and West Pakistan would be determined mainly by Sheikh Mujib who was the elected leader of the people of East Pakistan. How far would he be overwhelmed and conditioned by the circumstances in East Pakistan under Indian occupation was anybody's guess. But Mr. Bhutto acted under one single influence. Mujib must at once reach his people and chalk out the future course of events. Therefore, the first thing Mr. Bhutto did was to meet Sheikh Mujib and release him. Mujibur Rahman seems to have left the impression that, once back with his people and in a position to act independently, he would be willing to talk to the political leaders in the West and help resolve the future relations between the East and the West. This had led some people to hope that he would denounce Indian aggression and take the view that, for all that had happened, the disputes and misgivings between the people of East and West were purely internal family matters and India had no right whatsoever to interfere and impose solutions through military action. People expected Mujib to act in the best interest of his own people, the people of West Pakistan and those of Pakistan, as a whole. Mujibur Rahman, they thought, would try to get the Indian troops out of East Pakistan, and then negotiate with West Pakistan to see what relations could be maintained or developed in future between the erstwhile brothers bound by a common faith and a common nationhood.

Mujib did not wait to reach East Pakistan, and meet his people. While in London on his way home he proclaimed 'Bangladesh' as a sovereign state. He denounced Pakistan, the Quaid-i-Azam, the people of West Pakistan and the Army. Before going to his people he decided to go to Delhi, where he met Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, and called her a goddess of peace and the saviour of the Bengalis. Since then he has continued to adopt this extremist position. He has played to the tune of India and tried to divert his people's attention by harping on the atrocities and the so-called genocide by the Pakistan Army.

As narrated earlier the nation felt disillusioned. The enormous psychological and political results of the debacle were beyond the immediate comprehension of the people. The main blame was placed at the doors of the Armed Forces, particularly the Army, a more visible and easily understood service. The public confidence in the defence services was badly shaken. The disenchantment of the people with the military establishment was universal. In the heat of the moment the people talked about treachery at the highest level. Some even cursed the Army that they had lauded for the last 25 years and which had always come to their aid in all the national and man-made calamities that the nation had frequently suffered. In a few towns, soldiers were openly insulted. At least in one town—Gujrat—some *burqa* clad ladies foolishly hurled abuses at a couple of soldiers passing by. This was strange behaviour in a country where a soldier and his profession had always commanded popularity and respect. The situation soon changed when the truth started trickling in through the thick screen of alien propaganda.

The armed forces themselves were disillusioned and most bitter. Mixed feelings of depression and disgrace were rampant amongst them. They were convinced that their government and the high command had let them down. They could not comprehend the wisdom of agreeing to a cease-fire when most of them had not even fired a shot. Wherever the troops had come into action in West Pakistan, they had either occupied the objectives given to them or had prevented the enemy from breaking through their prepared defences.

The world was not shocked at our political ineptness, but it did receive a jolt by our surrender at Dacca. The international image

of Pakistan which had suffered serious damage on account of the events in East Pakistan during 1971, was further tarnished by the surrender at Dacca followed by the cease-fire in the West. The small neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal and perhaps Burma which had looked up to Pakistan to keep the rising power of ambitious India in check, felt let down. So did the Muslim States, which had confidence in friendly Pakistan and some of which looked up to it for guidance. For Muslims of the world, it was difficult to comprehend that Muslims could invoke the help of non-Muslims to kill their Muslim brothers. India on the other hand, had achieved her long cherished dream and gained in stature and prestige. She had by the folly of Pakistani rulers, seemingly succeeded in destroying the delicate balance of power which had been built up as a safeguard to peace in the region. India had always looked askance at the military balance between Pakistan and herself. She had maintained that it made India and the region vulnerable to the intrigues of the great powers. Now she felt that she had been able to remove the only rival to the Indian supremacy in the region and had acquired the flexibility to proceed further with her aim of becoming the dominant power in the region. By doing so she had apparently exposed the whole of South Asia to Great Power rivalries.

The events of 1971, and the subsequent war have radically changed the relationship between India and Pakistan. Between 1947 and 1971, Indian policy makers had faced many ups and downs in the pursuit of their hostility against Pakistan. The events in 1971 presented India with the opportunity of partially dismantling Pakistan, and she took it. It remains to be seen whether she will be satisfied with what she has achieved or would like to work for the complete destruction of Pakistan, which has been one of her avowed aims since 1947. It is perfectly clear that the Indian invasion of East Pakistan was motivated not by sympathy for the people of that region but by New Delhi's long range foreign policy objectives. Her success has also enabled her to satisfy her national ego, solve some of her economic problems and, for the time being, control the West Bengal situation. In the pursuit of her objectives, India seems to have paid a heavy price by way of subservience to Soviet Russia. It remains to be seen whether the creation of a third entity of 'Bangladesh' in the subcontinent, will not result in new and difficult internal problems for India.

Under the circumstances the agreement at Simla was a good beginning from India's point of view. She could assert, which she had already started doing, that she bore no ill-will towards Pakistan and was willing to live peacefully with her neighbours. These feelings have been reciprocated by Pakistan. But the deep mistrust and lack of faith that has existed between the two countries, has been accentuated by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's consistent demand on Islamabad to recognize 'Bangladesh' without at the same time agreeing to meet its leaders. In order to malign Pakistan Armed Forces, he continues threatening to hold trials of Pakistani prisoners of war held in India. Mujibur Rahman is fully supported in this by India. India's continuous holding of prisoners of war which include a number of civilians and their familes, is not in any way helping to normalize relations between the two countries. Unfortunately, the good intentions of Pakistan alone cannot help, the future of peace in the subcontinent rests entirely on the shoulders of India. In the process of dismembering Pakistan, India seems to have succeeded in securing her eastern flank. With the minimized threat from Pakistan, will India lean towards China and normalize relations with that country? After all China's bogey was meant primarily to enable India to prepare herself against Pakistan.

At present Pakistan stands divided. The great idea which the Muslims of the subcontinent had decided to translate into a reality did not fail because the ideal was wrong. It failed only on account of the failings and follies of those who were responsible for its execution. The threads can still be picked up and woven into a pattern. Pakistan is no doubt divided, but it has not lost its importance altogether. Pakistan's relevance in the global strategy has not diminished. Its strategic position in the Indian Ocean, its situation as a sentinel, particularly to the Persian Gulf, an extremely important world area, and its flanking position for China, combine to bestow upon it a responsibility which cannot be ignored by the world powers. The strategic significance of the Indian Ocean for world peace, which came into prominence after the British declaration to withdraw from it, was brought sharply into focus by the Indo-Pakistan War and the predominant role played in it by the Soviet Union. Increasing power of Russia in the Indian Ocean cannot be allowed to go unchallenged by the USA and China. In the changing balance of power in South Asia, none of the big powers, not even Russia can ignore Pakistan. There is thus no place for alarm and despondencyamongst us. We must on the

contrary comprehend fully the country's new international potentialities and get prepared to play our rightful role in the new balancing act of the major powers in South Asia. The significance of the role will entirely depend on Pakistan's political stability and the diplomatic acumen of its leaders. The first class manpower and the natural resources available are sufficient for the important role Pakistan can play.

CHAPTER XVII

REASONS FOR DEBACLE

PAKISTAN was not defeated; it was humiliated, which is still worse. The reasons of the debacle are not far to seek. We have just to pause and look into ourselves. The failing was in us and not elsewhere. It was we who failed to produce viable and popular institutions and allowed self-seekers to thrive on colonial types of governments. The colonial roots of *afsariat*, *daftariat* and *choud hriat* (bureaucracy, red-tapism and bossism) were never destroyed. In fact they were allowed to entrench themselves and flourish. The country's intellectuals and the university, college and school teachers failed to create a proper background for unity. The people docilely tolerated incompetent and corrupt governments and tried to salve their consciences by blaming others for their own shortcomings. They frittered away their energies on regional and local issues and showed little interest in, and no vision for, the national problems and the unity of the country.

Enough has already been written on our political and socio-economic failings to need any elaboration. Only a brief reference should suffice here. In the political field, we have shamefully to admit that we were not able to produce a workable constitution.

The 1956 Constitution took almost ten years of bickerings and compromises and in the end it was never implemented: the 1962 Constitution, universally disliked, was not given a chance even by its own authors. The political atmosphere had, therefore, always been unhealthy and uncertain. The gulf between the rulers and the ruled had been widening. Economic development was planned and carried out without any regard to socio-economic conditions, and the mass of the people consequently did not benefit. The economic policies were particularly unsuited to the socio-economic conditions in East Pakistan. They widened the gap between the haves and have-nots and generated class consciousness and mutual jealousies. Social development was ignored and did not keep pace with economic development. We took short cuts by borrowing Western social institutions and norms which could not be grafted on Pakistani conditions. Society lost its old stability and divided itself into compartments. The state, based on an ideology, had strayed away from it.

The uncertainty in national affairs drove the people to regional recourses and regionalism started overpowering nationalism. India grasped these fissiparous tendencies and, eager to destroy her enemy followed the strategy which Hitler had prescribed for himself. He had said: 'People have killed only when they could not achieve their aim in other ways. There is a broadened strategy with intellectual weapons....Why should I demoralize the enemy by military means, if I can do so better and more cheaply in other ways? Our strategy is to destroy the enemy from within to conquer him through himself.'* Indians seemed to understand modern warfare, where the main target of assault is not the defence forces of the enemy but its population. She diverted more and more of her energies, particularly after 1965 towards this strategy. She fully utilized propaganda as a weapon of war. Pakistanis, with their own confusion and chaos, helped her, and by the end of 1971, had succeeded in dividing their own country so that India could just walk in and formalise what already existed.

The information media, instead of advocating the principles which governed our life and affairs, had turned to the projection of personalities. They frittered away their energies and finances during 1971 to keep the coterie in power. The hostile propaganda of the

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* *Strategy: the indirect approach* by B.H. Liddle Hart, p. 225, Fabre and Fabre, London.

enemy was left free to capture and poison the minds of the people. When enemy propaganda began to label Pakistanis and particularly the Armed Forces Officers and Jawans, as devils incarnate, it remained unanswered. Our case, though legally and morally correct, went by default.

One of the newspapers of a friendly country warned us against our mistakes in a long article. It said: 'The Turkish press was under the influence of India and international Communist propaganda and failed to judge the disturbances in Pakistan as an internal affair....We observed with regret during the 1965 war and the recent developments in East Pakistan that Islamabad has not been able to make itself heard by the world. A country like Pakistan which, despite British exploitation, has been successful in preserving its national values, should be able to make itself heard. For this, a very efficient Central News Service should be started in Pakistan which could provide timely briefings to foreign journalists and promptly disseminate news about happenings. It is not enough to say 'I am right.' Pakistani friends should evaluate the situation and speak their mind on the problems in a way that will help Pakistan.'*

Defence, as a subject, was kept exclusively in the hands of a selected few. It never came under the public review, nor were those responsible ever called to account for their acts of omission or commission. Lack of public accountability prevented us from learning any lessons from past mistakes. This also generated a false image of our military potential which led to national complacency.

The nation remained untrained for war and unprepared to fight for its integrity. In other words, it lacked defence capacity which comes from a general spirit of resistance or the will of the people to uphold the independence of the country against external pressures. The reason was simple: the people of Pakistan had never been taken into confidence or educated on defence matters. Even their political leaders never showed any awareness of the fact that defence was entirely a national responsibility and that in a democratic society no one group or individual could be allowed to make arbitrary decisions about peace and war. The people and their leaders, therefore, had no conception of the military affairs; nor could their

*The *Adalet*, Ankara, June 24, 1971.

uninformed minds comprehend the subtleties of the inter-relationship of politics, diplomacy and military force. The entire span of national affairs, deprived of its inter-connections, was divided into strict compartments in which defence became the sole duty and function of the armed forces. This division brought immense harm to the cause of national defence. The only concept of war, therefore, which people and their leaders formed in their naive minds, was that of their armed forces fighting on the borders. As long as they had the armed forces to fight on the country's borders, all was well. Reassured and confident, they continued to revel in the lethargy of their day-to-day existence.

The Armed Forces that the country inherited and gradually built up during the first decade of Pakistan were fully professional and with their fighting qualities were rightly counted amongst the best small forces of the world. Gradually, the Government started leaning on the armed forces, particularly the army to keep peace in the country. It started entrusting some socio-economic tasks and internal security duties to the Army. The more efficiently the army carried out these tasks, the more the Government depended on it at the expense of its training and the morale of the political institutions and the civil services. Later Governments started looking up to the army for their survival, that naturally sucked its senior officers into politics.

Our Armed Forces, though small in strength, were superior to those of India in tactical doctrine and organization when the India-China war took place in 1962. We still had the ascendancy in these spheres in 1965. But we had been declining according to the degree of our involvement in making and unmaking regimes. Gradually, the officer corps, intensely proud of its professionalism was eroded at its apex into third class politicians and administrators. Due to the absence of a properly constituted political government, the selection and promotion of officers to the higher ranks depended on one man's will. Gradually, the welfare of institutions was sacrificed to the welfare of personalities. To take the example of the army, the higher command had slowly been weakened by retiring experienced officers at a disturbingly fast rate. Between 1955 and November 1971, in about 17 years 40 Generals had been retired, of whom only four had reached their superannuation age. Similar was the case with other senior ranks. Those in the higher ranks who showed some independence of outlook were invariably

removed from service. Some left in sheer disgust in this atmosphere of insecurity and lack of the right of criticism, the two most important privileges of an armed force officer. The extraordinary wastage of senior officers, particularly of the army, deprived the services of the experience and training vital to their efficiency and welfare. Some officers were placed in positions that they did not deserve or had no training for. As a result, we saw Yahya Khan surrounded by a coterie of officers who were incapable of taking decisions and not morally strong enough to use their authority. They were just the most obedient servants or yes-men who had lost all professional and moral integrity.

When the Armed Forces were allowed to be supreme in the country, there could have been no accountability for their officers' acts of omission and commission. No uniform yard sticks were used to judge their performance. Instead, coloured accounts of their accomplishments were publicised. No wonder that they started forming wrong ideas about themselves and became proud. We did not benefit by the lessons learnt during the 1965 war nor did we try to rectify our shortcomings. From 1969 onwards, when General Yahya Khan became President, the Armed Forces were dragged more and more into the administration of the country. Since then there was no question of training for war seriously, and wherever little effort was made in this respect, it was mere eyewash. When the war came in 1971, the armed services were no longer professionally orientated. Their involvement in Martial Law and the country's politics had seriously harmed their professionalism. The greed of certain senior officers who took advantage of the prevailing atmosphere during 1970 and 1971 to grab land and money and the widespread misuse of manpower and equipment had obliterated the sacredly held values of a soldier.

In 1971, power and authority had been concentrated in one man who was at once President, CMLA, executive head of the Armed Forces, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Commander-in-Chief of the Army. There were no institutions to help him. The few which still existed were not used by him or their advice was ignored. Even Hitler, the great dictator, had his cabinet and his general staff to advise and plan for him. Therefore, even if the country had clear political and military aims, General Yahya Khan and whatever government he controlled lacked the power of execution and implementation. The country had thus lost all its ability to wage war and retain its sovereignty and integrity.

Under those conditions, when a purely political problem arose in East Pakistan, there was utter confusion between aims and objectives. In the absence of a political aim, a military aim could not exist. The mere statement that Pakistan will be defended against foreign invasion is indeed not a clear military aim. There was no seriously thought out pattern for East Pakistan. Military action was taken without any appreciation and we drifted into the use of military means to solve an entirely internal political problem. There was also a vast divergence between means and ends. We did not have the means to keep Pakistan integrated by military force alone. If the intention was to keep Pakistan together, it could not have been done only by using military force. There should have been a well considered political aim, which should have been worked out in relation to the means available. The incorrect military aim was not based on any political aim. Therefore our leaders blundered into war with India at a time when the country had lacked political stability for the past four years. As a comparison when Pakistan went to war in 1965, there was external and internal stability in spite of the fact that Field Marshal Ayub Khan was a dictator and his Basic Democracies had been widely denounced as anti-democratic.

Planning at the national level was altogether missing. The country was least prepared to go to war, which should have been avoided by all means. There is no doubt that with a little fore-thought and intelligent handling of the situation, India could have been denied any pretext for aggression in East Pakistan. Unfortunately the situation was not only grossly mishandled but one gets the impression that it was deliberately bungled. The nation was prepared neither politically, nor diplomatically nor even militarily to face a war with India. Militarily it had no resources for such a war. The Prime Minister of India is reported to have taken pride in the fact that, while Pakistan imported automobiles, India manufactured tanks and aircraft. The pride was justified.

Whatever Pakistan did have, was not organised for maximum utilization. For example, there were only a few forward airfields and these too were not operationally prepared for activation when required. There was even a shortfall of personal weapons, equipment and clothing for the existing forces and those raised as the threat of war mounted. Whatever little supplies of these items were available in West Pakistan had been diverted to East Pakistan to equip the para-military forces there. Even reserve materials were

withdrawn from army units and sent to East Pakistan. The condition of equipment in certain units was pathetic. Just to take one example, the communications of old Sherman tanks did not work and there were instances when young officers and junior commissioned officers had to get down from their tanks in the middle of a battle to pass orders to other tanks.

Each armed service of course had its own plans of war. However, there were no joint army-air or naval-air plans. As far as the army was concerned, it only asked and received from Air Headquarters the indication of the quantum of air effort which was likely to be available to the army for formulating its own plans. The air support which the Navy wanted was never catered for. It was vaguely promised a few reconnaissance sorties and some close support sorties which were dependent on availability. It never occurred to the Supreme Commander or even the COS, Army or the C-in-C, Navy to ask for the PAF plan including the siting of planes, deployment of radar and activation of airfields. They just accepted what the C-in-C, Air promised them vaguely. Consequently, owing to the lack of joint planning and inter-service coordination, there were dangerous flaws in the plans of each service. Certain portions of the army plans were based on air support which did not materialise when demanded. The Navy suffered due to lack of air support. The PAF plan was exclusively its own and did not take into consideration its impact on the operations of the other two services.

In the final analysis, it is abundantly clear that the country was forced into war without any national aim. It was fought without a purpose and with total lack of coordination between the civil effort and the armed forces and between the three fighting services. It was, in fact, a classical demonstration of how not to fight a war. The Indian victory was due as much to their careful and patient planning as it was to the lack of all this in Pakistan. The Indian High Command had assured victory by leaving enough margin for setbacks in the field; the Pakistan High Command on the other hand, had ensured its own defeat even if its armed forces won all the tactical battles.

In the absence of a higher defence mechanism and other government institutions and in the atmosphere of intrigue and uncertainty that naturally prevailed under the rule of a single

individual who had gradually stopped functioning, the chain of command of the armed forces withered at the highest level. The President, as the Supreme Commander was unable to fight the war as a whole. There was lack of coordination within the Services Headquarters. The atmosphere at the highest level in the GHQ was not suited to the conduct of a war. General Abdul Hamid Khan, the Chief of Staff and virtually the Commander-in-Chief, was the most indecisive man that the GHQ had had at any time. His indecisiveness affected other senior officers too. He was thick in intrigue against Lieutenant-General Peerzada, the Principal Staff Officer to the President, whom he very much wanted to be replaced by Major General Ghulam Umar, the Chief of National Security. Some of the Principal Staff Officers at the GHQ were not even on talking terms with each other. This mutual hostility was naturally fatal to mutual confidence. The Corps and Divisional Commanders were hard put to it to get themselves heard. At least two of the three Corps Commanders seemed to be disliked by the COS. Under the circumstances the Commanders who were not liked by the COS did not get the attention and assistance they deserved. When it was decided to activate the western front, only a few of the Corps and Divisional Commanders were taken into confidence and only about the date at that; the time for starting operations was still not disclosed to them. They were hurried into operations without the proper notice required for smooth and deliberate action. The IV Corps Commander, Bahadur Sher, was only informed of the 'H' hour (time for starting the operations) at about 1430 hours on December 3. The Corps Commander was naturally surprised that he was expected to embark on a major operation at such a short notice and rang up the COS. The COS said that he could not hear him and asked him to 'come on the secrophone.' When contacted on secrophone, the COS complained that his secrophone was not working. Later, the Vice-Chief of the General Staff rang up the Corps Commander to inform him that the orders had to be carried out. The worst example of hurrying the formations and units into battle was that of 18 Division. The Divisional Commander was literally forced into attacking without having been provided the extra resources demanded by him and approved by the COS.

The all too many shortcomings of the Pakistan High Command apart, the country was also singularly unfortunate in the defection and treachery of the East Pakistani personnel of the armed forces

who had been emotionally disturbed by the Awami League, another serious outcrop of the political chaos in the country. The effect of these defections on the conduct of war even in the West has not been appreciated yet. All information including top secret plans had been passed on to the Indians. There was hardly any information about the Armed Forces and their plans which was not known to the Indians when they attacked Pakistan. The Navy's dispositions and its plans of operations were known to the enemy. As for the Air Force, even the gaps in the radar cover of the borders had been passed on to the Indians and at least on three vital targets the Indian raids were led by the East Pakistani pilots themselves. Similar and perhaps more serious was the case of the army because of the nature of its operations. Not only were detailed plans of some formations and units given to the Indians, they were also led by safe routes through minefields on to the objectives by East Pakistani defectors. For example, a Brigade Major defecting from the Sialkot-Shakargarh area to India took operational plans of the area with him. The Bengali defectors of 19 FF led the attack on their own battalion in Shakargarh. Defectors of 5 EBR led the Indian attack on 43 Baluch in the Lahore area. All Divisional Commanders had desired that East Pakistani elements should be withdrawn from their commands, but this was not allowed by the GHQ. As a result, a lot of effort had to be diverted to keep them under surveillance In some formation headquarters it almost became a nightmare for the commanders and their staff.

The macabre events of 1971 showed clearly that the country was not prepared to meet the challenge politically, economically or militarily. The war in East Pakistan was brought on by the political chaos created by the idiocy of Yahya Khan and his advisers. The humiliating surrender at Dacca was the result of the ineptness of the high command and the commander appointed by them. In military parlance the whole affair amounted to a self-inflicted injury. It is no less than a miracle that in spite of indecisive and indifferent leadership, the lack of weapons and equipment, and the defection and treachery of Bengalis, the formations and units in the field still fought so tenaciously and acquitted themselves so well. Not many defence services could have gone through the events of 1971 without losing their cohesiveness and discipline. As the fog of adverse propaganda gradually lifts and the great odds against which they were doing their duty become clear, their deeds are being appreciated with sympathy and in the correct perspective. It is

reported that during the victory march of the Indian Army units in the streets of Chittagong, a spectator observed 'what a magnificent army.' A Mukti Bahini captain—apparently a rebel officer from the Pakistan Army remarked: 'But no comparison to the Pakistan Army.' This was not all nostalgia.

We seem to hurl our armed forces into war unprepared and unplanned as we did in 1965 and in 1971, and tend not to go to war when ready like in 1962. To paraphrase Chairman Mao's saying, we do not seem to know when we can fight and the enemy cannot. It is most unfair and unrealistic to ask soldiers, sailors and airmen to fight a war without proper weapons and equipment, a coherent political leadership, a higher defence mechanism and proper professional leadership of the armed forces at the higher levels. We went to war even without boots, belts, berets and blankets which are all manufactured in the country. India tried that in 1962 against China and suffered, but she learnt her lesson. The one single factor that contributed most to our debacle in December, 1971 was the failure of planned and integrated war effort at the national level. A modern war is 'too serious a business to be left to Generals', and too complex to be waged at all without setting up a suitable infrastructure at the national level. The country had not been able to establish well defined institutions, which could collect and sift the information required for making policies, analyse government policies and coordinate their implementation. Various governments at the Centre had, instead, gradually demolished even the few institutions that the country had inherited from the British at Independence.

When political institutions were being devalued the question of developing political and higher military institutions for the control of the armed forces could not be organised. The country remained without any reasonable higher defence mechanism which is essential to control the armed forces and get the best out of them during emergencies. In the absence of political direction and clear-cut national aims, the armed forces worked in a vacuum. Before 1958, the various civilian Governments had failed to provide qualified civilian leadership and direction for the armed forces. The Army Commander-in-Chief had remained supreme. It is reported that when on becoming Defence Minister, Mr. M. A. Khuhro was being briefed by the then C-in-C, Army at GHQ, he was told in the presence of other army officers, 'I make the recommendations, and

you just sign.' All Defence Ministers after Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan just did the same. They had no clue to defence matters and were not capable of contributing anything nor had they enough political backing to exert their authority. Therefore, they remained content with the arrangements. The officials of the Defence Ministry were also not very helpful. They were normally transferred before they could learn their job. Most of them were kept occupied by financial wranglings and minor administrative matters.

In the political atmosphere prevailing in the country, the nation could not be prepared for war. The necessary defence infrastructure like manufacture and provision of weapons and equipment, civil defence and other organisations needed to maintain the nation's morale during emergencies was not seriously considered or created. We could not even properly operate the type of defence mechanism which we had largely copied from the British after Independence. It was a sound and workable system, which would have improved in the process of implementation. It had remained in suspended animation. Of the two highest committees, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet and the Joint Chiefs Committee, the former was seldom formed and the latter only discussed minor points of interservices interest. The procedure of controlling the armed forces was, therefore, neither colonial nor democratic nor even totalitarian. It was just a hotch-potch. Defence became the responsibility of one man, the President of Pakistan. In the critical months he had no Cabinet body to handle the defence problems of the nation and direct the war effort. We still seemed to follow the pre-1947 British Indian system. President functioned as Whitehall without its institutions, the Army C-in-C like the C-in-C in British India and the Defence Ministry as the Defence Department of British India, which acted as a post office for the three services. At best the Defence Ministry became routine coordinating agency and its authority only circumspect.

The three armed forces headquarters suffered from a complete absence of any form of higher organisation which could plan the overall defence strategy, assign clear roles to each service and co-ordinate their activities. With the Army being predominant amongst the armed forces, the roles that the Navy and the Air Force could play were reduced to insignificance.

The most important principles on which our country's higher

defence mechanism should be based are as follows:—

a. The civilian authority must be supreme and well informed and conversant with the mechanism of defence. It should have well organised institutions to impose its will through direct orders and control of funds.

b. There should be a well defined civilian machinery consisting of qualified persons to formulate the country's defence policy at the ministerial level.

c. The organisation for giving professional military advice to the national policy makers, through military planning and strategic assessments, should consist of the presons who should also be responsible for executing the country's military policy.

d. The relationship between b. and c. above, that is between the civilian machinery and the professional advisers, must be well defined and unambiguous. Team work between the civilians and the military experts to produce the maximum defence effort with the given resources is as important as cooperation among the fighting services to generate military effort of any consequence.

It may be conceded that on paper, the present system meets the requirements of the principles discussed in the preceding paragraph at the national level. The government is responsible for the higher direction of war. The Cabinet lays down the overall defence policy and the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (D.C.C.) consisting of all the key ministers, handles and coordinates the national defence policy both in peace and war. At the ministerial level there is the defence council which considers and accords approval or approves for submission to the D.C.C. all plans and policy matters affecting national defence and the armed forces, recommended to it by the Joint Chiefs Committee (J.C.C.). At inter-service level we have the J.C.C. the highest military body consisting of the heads of the services to consider all problems affecting national defence and render professional military advice to the Government. At service level we of course have their Chiefs of Staff assisted by their respective headquarters staff. They perform dual functions —provide professional advice to the Government and execute the

military plans approved by the Government. All the three layers have numerous sub-committees to assist the committees in the smooth performance of their functions.

But as stated earlier, the various organisations have mostly stayed on paper and seldom was any effort made to get them going. Except for the J.C.C. which always had a secretariat, and which only dealt with the routine administrative matters of the three services, the other committees or sub-committees were starved of staff or were never formed. The blame for the failure of the system should be shared as much by the weak political command at government level as by the Defence Ministry. In a way, the services themselves are also to blame for not properly organising the inter-services infrastructure. The Navy and the Air Force have always been too small in size to provide enough officers of appropriate ranks for the organisations at the inter-service level and too jealous to agree to let the bigger service—the army, do so. The Service Chiefs although equal by appointments, have always been unequal in rank. The differences in their professional outlook, without a satisfactory and unbiased controlling authority at the top, have produced friction and conflicts. Historically, due to the development of the Army and its predominant role in the defence of the country, the other two services might have been subordinated to the Army. Wisely, we had agreed to keep them separate and to allow them to develop as independent services. The development now should be taken to its logical conclusion. They must be made to share the joint responsibility of national defence irrespective of their size.

In order to rationalise our higher defence mechanism with the highest constitutional body for the planning and conduct of war and a unified command working with clear military and political objectives, the existing system on paper, must be revived as a first step. The experience of the past two decades shows that, in order to work this system satisfactorily, the following few steps must be taken immediately. Firstly, the Naval and PAF Headquarters should be moved to Islamabad/Rawalpindi alongside the GHQ. Secondly, the three services, irrespective of their size must be allowed to have an equal say in the defence of the country. Thirdly, consider the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff from any of the three services for a fixed tenure as a permanent Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Committee in order to make this committee

effective. The present system of three separate Chiefs of Staff loosely linked in a Joint Chiefs Committee, has never proved efficient. No doubt, the suggested arrangements may not seem to accord with our traditions of the three services working independently and the predominant role of the Army in the defence of the country. However, any problems arising from the proposed departure from those traditions be overcome by allowing the Chiefs of Staff to retain the independence of presenting their views to the Defence Minister or even the highest constitutional authority in case of disagreement. Fourthly, a whole time Defence Minister should be appointed in the Cabinet. The appointment of a separate Defence Minister does not in any way, absolve the Prime Minister from his responsibility for the defence of the country. A defence Minister would act as a Deputy to the Prime Minister and would be capable of devoting all his energies to the most important responsibility of the Prime Minister. The fighting services have always suffered due to the non-existence of a Defence Minister who should devote all his energies to defence matters. Once the existing higher defence mechanism is jointly put into operation according to these suggestions it can continue to be reviewed and improved in the light of further experience.

Defence production and procurement has never had a reasonable organization. The small cell for this purpose under the Defence Ministry has not proved adequate. It has not succeeded in mobilizing the country's industry to meet her defence requirements as far as possible. The civil industry has in fact never been used seriously to meet the defence requirements of the country. The country is not in a position to manufacture heavy and sophisticated equipment yet. However, its light engineering industry is advanced enough to manufacture a vast range of small equipment and almost all the spare-parts required for the heavy equipment. This can be done only under a precise government policy on the subject which would encourage the users to utilize with enthusiasm the skill and the facilities available in the country. This highly important work cannot be left to a cell in the Defence Ministry. Only an independent ministry with a whole time Minister responsible to the Prime Minister can meet the requirement.

Given the purpose, the direction and the means of control and coordination at the highest level, the country still has the potential to emerge as a self respecting and respected nation. The country's

destiny is in the balance. We have been given a respite to meet the challenge. Let us make use of it. Let us make sure that we will not allow the nation to be plunged into war, and our armed forces hurled into battles, unprepared and unplanned as we did in 1965, and 1971 and that never again will this be done at the whim of a single man. The main requirements of preparedness for war are:—

a. The national aim and purpose must be unambiguous and the national strategey clearly defined.

b. The people must be educated in defence matters and the persons responsible for affairs of the state must be made accountable to the public for their acts of commission and omission.

c. A proper political and diplomatic posture must be adopted against dangers to the integrity of the country.

d. A higher defence mechanism must be established with a clear-cut organization and well defined functions.

e. A well trained higher military leadership must be provided and the fighting services must be trained and equipped to meet modern requirements instead of being made to depend on raw strength and physical courage.

The prerequisite for achieving all this is good government based on well defined and efficient political institutions for conducting the affairs of state. This has? to be created by the political leaders. The moral, material and mental unpreparedness of the nation in 1971, was the cumulative effect of the political, economic and social conditions that had been allowed to develop gradually during the last twenty-five years. For this state of affairs all of us are to be blamed, but the largest share of the blame must be accepted by our political leaders. Politicians, if they want to see their country flourish and enjoy as much freedom and independence as a comparatively small and poor country can have, must get down to ruling it properly, forgetting their bickerings and petty quarrels. They must ponder earnestly over what great damage they have already done to the country and get down to rectifying their past mistakes.

APPENDIX I

MILITARY POWER—INDIA/PAKISTAN

Comparative Military Strength

1\. a. **Army**

	India	Pakistan	
Total Strength	950,000	365,000	(including Azad Kashmir Forces)
Armoured Division	1	2	
Independent Armoured Brigade	4	1	
Infantry Division	15	14	
Mountain Division	10	—	
Independent Infantry Brigade	6	1	
Parachute Brigade	2	—	
Anti-Aircraft Artillery Units	21	7	
Artillery Brigade	3	—	
Territorial Army Infantry Battalions (Embodied)	27	—	
Territorial Army Artillery Units (Embodied)	14	—	
Mukti Bahini Regular Brigade	3	—	

b. **Para-Military Forces**

Border Security Force Battalions	88 (organised/ equipped trained like infantry units)	—	
Central Police Reserve	55	—	Battalions
Mukti Bahini in strength	100,000	—	
Rangers (Border Police)	—	11,500	
Frontier Constabulary, Scouts/Militia etc.	—	40,000	(deployed mainly on NWF)
East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces	—	13,000	
Razakar/Mujahids etc.	—	60,000	

c. **Navy**

Total Strength	42,000	8,000	
Aircraft Carrier	1	—	
Cruisers	2	1	(used for training only)
Submarines	4	4	
Destroyers	12	5	
Frigates—Anti-Submarine/ Anti Aircraft	9	2	
Mine Sweepers	8	8	
OSA Missile Boats	4	—	
Patrol Boats	10	4	
Naval Air Force— Sea Hawks Alize	35	—	
Helicopters (Sea King)	12	—	

d. **Air Force**

Total Strength	85,000	15,000
Bomber, Fighter, Interceptor, Reconnaissance Squadrons	38	11½
SA-2 SAM Complexes	52	—
Combat Aircraft	1,000	250

2. The above Indian figures are for August/September 1971. They do not include the following formations/units which were being raised at the time:—

a.	Armoured Division	1
b.	Infantry/Mountain Division	2
c.	Artillery Brigades	3
d.	Armoured Regiments	6
e.	Artillery Regiments	14
f.	Infantry Battalions	22
g.	Engineer Regiments	10

The figures also do not account for 50,000 recruits finishing their training in about September/October 1971 and 65,000 reservists called up about the same time. Comparisons are again difficult as some Indian Divisions had four or five brigades and some brigades had more than three battalions, sometimes up to seven battalions.

3 The addition to the Indian Navy and the Air Force during the last two months before the war are not known.

Weapons and Equipment

4 Up to 1962, India did not commit herself to getting Foreign Military Aid. She followed the method of getting Economic Aid from her friends, thus sparing her own foreign exchange resources to purchase her military requirements from abroad. The fact that Pakistan was getting Military Aid from the USA was used against this country in diplomatic and international propaganda. But the thinking changed after India's debacle against China in 1962. The USA, the UK and the USSR immediately responded to India's call and poured in substantial quantities of arms. While the USA later on slowed down the scale of help and subsequently stopped aid in 1965, the UK and the USSR continued to help India and also assisted her to establish Tank and Aircraft factories. Other countries in the communist bloc also provided various types of equipment. The table below gives details of weapons acquired by India from foreign sources:—

	Up to 1970	*In 1971*	*Total*
T-54/T-55 Tanks (USSR)	630	270	900
Centurians/AMX-13 Tanks (UK/France)	500	—	500
PT-76 Tanks (USSR)	200	—	200
160 mm Mortars (USSR)	—	60	60
130 mm guns (USSR)	500	50	550
120 mm Tempella Mortars (French)	—	90	90
105 mm (Abbot) Gun Self-propelled (US)	90	—	90
100 mm Field Guns (USSR)	250	—	250
76 mm guns (USSR)	250	—	250
L-70 Anti-Aircraft Guns (Sweden)	270	30	300
Tiger Cat Missiles (UK)	—	30	30
Recoilless Guns (US Origin)	700	250	950
Kolos Tractor (USSR)	—	250	250

Armoured Recovery Vehicles (USSR)	—	60	60
Bridge Layer Tanks (USSR)	—	50	50
TOPAS armoured personnel carrier (USSR/Czechoslovakia)	250	375	625
SKOT armoured carrier (Czechoslovakia/Poland)	—	260	260
BTR 60 PB armoured personnel carrier (USSR)	—	130	130
TMM 3 trestle-cum Span Bridge (USSR)	—	5 sets	5 sets
122 mm 40 barrelled Rocket Launcher (USSR)	—	60	60

With the induction of these sophisticated weapons, Indian Army had tremendously increased its fire power, mobility and fighting capabilities.

5 The Russian aid to India in weapons and equipment during the last months of 1971 is not fully known except the following weapons provided to India:—

a.	T-55 Tanks	Approximately	410
b.	T-62 Tanks	,,	96
c.	122 mm RL	,,	98

d. Unknown number of items like TMM-3 Bridges, Tank Transporters, Mine Breaching Trawlers, which improved the mobility of Indian troops.

6 Besides this huge amount of weapons provided by her friends India's defence budget over the years continued increasing and got a further spurt after the war with Pakistan in 1965. From 3,750 million rupees in 1961-62, it increased to rupees 9,550 million in 1965-66 and rupees 14,000 million in 1970-71. This is over and above the amount, approximately 5,000 million, earmarked annually for the defence oriented projects in the civil sector. Pakistan budget in 1970-71 was about reupees 3,000 million.

7. No less than 35 Ordnance Factories were producing the following:

a. Tanks
b. Vehicles
c. Explosives
d. Armaments
e. Electric and Communication equipment
f. Engineering equipment
g. Sighting/Vision devices
h. Clothing and general stores

8. In addition to these Ordnance Factories, eleven Public Sector Industrial Units manufactured the following:—

a. Aircraft
b. Guided Missiles
c. Warships
d. Electronic equipment
e. Earth moving equipment
f. Machine tools.

These factories met the bulk of Armed Forces requirements and some weapons and ammunition were even being exported to some Middle East and African countries. The total value of the production was estimated to be worth rupees 3,000 million annually.

Pakistan Ordnance Factories manufactured only small arms and ammunition and artillery ammunition up to field guns' level.

APPENDIX II

COMPARATIVE STRENGTH—EAST PAKISTAN

1. **Infantry**

Type	*India*	*Pakistan*
Infantry/Mountain Divisions	8	3
Brigade Groups	3	1
Para Brigade	1	—
BSF Battalions	29	—
Mukti Bahini Brigades	3	—
Mukti Bahini Guerrillas	100,000	—
Mujahids/Razakars/EP CAF etc., armed with rifles	—	73,000

Note: a. At least 2 Indian divisions had 4 brigades and one 5 brigades and there were certain brigades which had from 5 to 7 battalions.

b. An Indian BSF battalion is organised like an infantry battalion with 4 MMGs and a number of 2" and 3" Mortars and 3.5 Rocket Launchers. It is trained like an infantry battalion.

c. Pakistan infantry battalion normally holds 72 LMGs as compared to 90 held by an Indian battalion. However, Pakistani battalions in East Pakistan were not uniformly armed and most of them did not have their full quota of automatic weapons.

2. **Armour**

Armoured Regiments	1 (T-55s)	1 M-24 (Chafee)
Armoured Regiments PT-76 (Amphibian)	2	—
Armoured Regiments Sherman	2	—
Independent Squadrons	2 (PT-76s)	1 M-24 (Chafee)
Armoured Car (Ferrets) Squadrons	1	—
APCs	For Two Battalions	—

Note:— M-24 is a light tank carrying 75 mm gun. It was last used in Korea in 1952 by the USA. PT-76 is an amphibian tank carrying 76.2 high velocity mm gun. T-55 is a medium tank carrying 100 mm gun. Both Indian tanks out-manoeuvred and out-gunned the Pakistani tanks. T-55 has also got deep fording capability.

	India	*Pakistan*
3. **Artillery**		
Field Regiments	23	6
Medium Regiments (5.5" and 130 mm)	3	—
Para-Field Regiments 75 mm	1	—
Mortar Batteries	21	5
4. **Air Force**		
Fighter-Bomber Squadrons	10	1
Air Transport	Fully met	—

5. **Navy**

4 sea going gun boats of Pakistan were facing the whole of the Indian Aircraft Carrier Task Force.

6. **Pakistan Defences**

a. To term Pakistani defences as fortresses will be a misnomer as the defences were not self-supporting bases of all arms i.e., infantry, artillery, engineers and service units which cannot be easily penetrated and are held in sufficient numbers. At certain focal points ditches, embankments and earth works were constructed with local material. As there were no mines and explosives available, Panjees (sharpened wooden sticks and bamboos) were used in the ditches and some booby-traps were also erected. All this was done to break up the infantry assault. No concrete structures were made. Cement, iron and stones are hard to come by in East Pakistan.

I have not been able to find out the exact number of towns etc. where these defences were built. It can safely be said that this arrangement was not made at all the places considered in the defence plan.

b. As a matter of policy the strong points were supposed to be stocked with supplies from 7 to 15 days with 15 to 30 days reserves held in rear areas.

APPENDIX III

TROOPS IN DACCA AT THE TIME OF SURRENDER

1. **Headquarters**

a. Headquarters Eastern Command
b. Rear Headquarters 14 Division
c. Headquarters 36 (ad hoc) Division originally EP CAF
d. Headquarters East Pakistan Logistic Area
e. Station Headquarters
f. Headquarters of Flag Officer Commanding, East Pakistan
g. Headquarters of Air Officer Commanding, East Pakistan
h. West Pakistan Police Headquarters
j Headquarters Director General, Razakars.

2. **Troops—Regular and Para**

Armoured Corps (ad hoc tanks troop)	50
Artillery (6 LAA Regiment, HQ Arty, reinforcements etc.)	700
Engineers (Rear parties of various units, HQ Engrs)	500
Signals (3 Battalions and various static units)	2000
Infantry (Remnants of 93 Brigade who reached Dacca on 13 December 1971 and reinforcements)	4500
Services (Ordnance and Supply installation, workshops)	1000
Navy	500
PAF	500
EP CAF	4000
Mujahids	1500
Razakars	7000
West Pakistan Police	2500
Industrial Security Force	1500
Total:	26250

3. The above excludes sick and wounded and hospital staff.

4. **Weapons**

Tanks	3
Anti-Aircraft guns	49
Heavy Mortars	4
6 Pounder Guns	4
3-inch Mortars	20
Recoilless Rifles	25
Rocket Launchers, 2-inch Mortars and Machine guns	Sufficient numbers
Small Arms	Sufficient numbers
River Boats	10

(The figures given in this appendix are based on the information provided by a staff officer who escaped from Dacca after surrender.)

APPENDIX IV

SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES

West Pakistan—(3 to 17 December 1971)

	Offrs	*JCOs*	*OR*	*Total*
Killed in Action (Shaheed)	62	52	1291	1405
Wounded	133	123	2822	3078
Missing	4	2	120	126
Missing believed killed	—	5	129	134
Missing believed POWs	3	7	205	215
Total:	202	189	4567	4958

East Pakistan—(March 1971 to December 1971)

	Offrs	*JCOs*	*OR*	*Total*
Killed in Action (Shaheed)	90	41	1162	1293
Wounded	132	80	2327	2539
Missing	9	1	25	35
Missing believed killed	3	7	330	340
Missing believed POWs before 16 December 1971	14	1	3	18
Total:	248	130	3847	4225

2. The ratio of officers/JCO casualties to OR:

West Pakistan	1	:	12
East Pakistan	1	:	10

The ratio of Offr/JCO killed (Shaheed) in action to OR:

West Pakistan	1	:	11
East Pakistan	1	:	9

The ratio of Offr/JCO wounded to OR:

West Pakistan	1	:	17
East Pakistan	1	:	11

3. The officer casualty figures include one General killed (Shaheed) and two wounded, and ten Lieutenant Colonels killed (Shaheed) and eleven wounded. The officer-jawan casualty ratio is as expected because they always fight shoulder to shoulder.
4. There may be more casualties in East Pakistan as some casualties may not have been reported during the last days of the war.
5. Indian casualties in the meantime are estimated to be 30,000 killed and wounded.

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THE AUTHOR

Major General (Retired) Fazal Muqeem Khan, S.Pk., SQA, has already established his place in the front line of our eminent writers through his books 'The Story of Pakistan Army' and 'The Pakistani Youth at Cross Roads'. He is most eminently qualified to have brought a detailed account of our inner weaknesses to limelight in an easy and highly readable language. His insight into the problems of our defence and his understanding of the two military regimes of Pakistan are only natural. And now with his unbiased account of the tragic events 1971, he has succeeded in making a valuable contribution towards lasting peace in South Asia

The General, a career soldier rose to such eminent appointments as the Commandant, Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul; Director General Military Training; General Officer Commanding 14 Division (East Pakistan) and the Chairman Pakistan Ordnance Factories. Having turned down ambassadorial appointments, he has made his country the main interest of his simple and scholarly life.

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